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TO RECONSTRUCTIONISM

BY *mordecai m. kaplan*



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Know how to Answer

A Guide to Reconstructionism

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**The Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc.
New York, 1951**

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INTRODUCTION:

The Aims
of
Reconstructionism

The Jewish Reconstructionist movement seeks to foster the physical and spiritual survival of the Jewish people by means of a new approach to Jewish life and tradition. It proposes ways and means of living a maximum Jewish life within the setting of a modern democratic state. Though its program is directed specifically to American Jews, its philosophy applies to Jewish life everywhere.

Reconstructionism views Judaism as a dynamic religious civilization. It addresses itself to the most urgent Jewish needs of our day, which are the following: 1) to restore the spiritual unity of the Jewish people, 2) to reorganize the communal life of the American Jews, 3) to aid the development of Israel, 4) to revitalize Jewish religion, 5) to encourage Jewish cultural creativity in education, literature and the arts, 6) to intensify participation by Jews in all activities that further the ideals of American democracy. These are the objectives which Reconstructionism strives to attain.

THE SPIRITUAL UNITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Every Jew depends upon every other Jew for the energy, resources, and courage with which to live as a Jew and to achieve complete self-fulfillment as a human being. This interdependence constitutes that spiritual unity which

have meaning for Jewish living in two civilizations, the American and the Jewish. Indifference to Jewish religion on the part of many Jews stems from the fact that religion, in their minds, is identified with particular doctrines and practices to which they cannot subscribe intellectually. However, religion can be so reinterpreted in every generation as to meet both the intellectual demands and the spiritual needs of that generation. It should always be recognized that the true function of religion is to influence man to live in harmony with the will of God as the Power that makes for the realization of the best in one's self and in one's people. That is the function which Jewish religion will have to fulfil, if it is to be once again the core of Jewish civilization.

EFFECTIVE JEWISH EDUCATION

Jewish education to be effective today, should transmit to the child the heritage of the past so that he may be equipped as a Jew to live in the present and to be prepared to meet the problems of the foreseeable future. Jewish education includes every aspect of Jewish culture: religion, Hebrew language, literature, contemporary Jewish problems, and the esthetic expression of Jewish experience. Because the home is so important an influence in all education, the Jewish home should have a cultural and spiritual atmosphere that is authentically Jewish. Since education is not confined

to the home, however, some regular portion of the time of each adult and child should be devoted to acquiring Jewish knowledge.

THE CULTIVATION OF THE ARTS

Art forms such as poetry, drama, music, dance, sculpture, and the graphic arts are no longer viewed as extra-curricular in the life of a people. They have come to be recognized as an integral and indispensable element in man's effort to raise himself above the level of the sub-human. If Judaism is to have a humanizing and spiritualizing influence it must accord to the arts no less significant a position than that which they occupy in all modern civilizations.

Jewish artists should be encouraged and stimulated to express their creativity within the sphere of Jewish life. They should be assisted through every means such as subsidies, scholarships, art exhibits, and promotion of competitive contests. What is needed, above all, is affirmative evaluation of the place of the arts in Judaism, on the part of rabbis and teachers through the various means at their command.

FURTHERANCE OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

The improvement of human relations has always been a major element in Jewish civilization. The concepts of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man are based on the Jewish view that mankind is one, that man

must learn to transcend the differences among races, peoples and religions. The Brotherhood of Man means cooperative effort to make a better life for all men. Jews should strive for the establishment of a social order that combines the maximum of human cooperation with the maximum of personal freedom. Jewish organizations and institutions ought to make Jews sensitive to those social evils that impede the attainment of this goal. Jewish communities and Jews individually should cooperate with the general population in furthering all movements which have as their purpose the eradication of poverty, exploitation, violence and war.

The foregoing is a brief summary of the Reconstructionist philosophy and program. It is presented as an introduction to the questions which are dealt with in this tract. These questions were asked by Jews in various parts of the country who listened to an exposition of Reconstructionism. The significance of the various items in this summary will, no doubt, become much clearer through the answers to these questions than through an elaboration of the summary itself. These questions are but a small fraction of those that have been asked and that are in need of being answered, but they are typical of those which generally occur to people on their first encounter with the idea that the reconstruction of Judaism is a prerequisite to the survival and enhancement of the Jewish people.

PART ONE:

The Meaning
of
Reconstructionism

WHY PLANNED RECONSTRUCTION?

1. Cannot what has kept the Jewish people alive during more than two thousand years of dispersion be depended upon to continue to do so?

No single factor is responsible for the continuity of the Jewish people. It may be the factor of ethical nationalism stressed by Ahad Ha-am; or of religious nationalism, as Ezekiel Kaufman believes; or of cultural nationalism, as held by Simon Dubnow; or of anti-Semitism, as those Jews feel with whom the fight against anti-Semitism is a major preoccupation.

The truth is that no historical phenomenon can be ascribed to a single cause. We would certainly not want to depend on anti-Semitism for Jewish survival. As for the other factors—they can be of significance in our time only if Jewish life is reconstructed so as to insure the maximum harmonious functioning of all of them.

2. Since, in the past, Judaism progressed by a process of unconscious evolution, why need we today plan its reconstruction?

What do we mean when we speak of "unconscious evolution"? We do not mean that those who participated in making the adjustment of Jewish tradition to the changing conditions of life were acting automatically without any conscious purpose in what they were doing. Our

Sages were not automata but intelligent human beings, using their wits in solving the problems that confronted them. When, for example, they first interpreted the Biblical law, "an eye for an eye" as referring to money damages, they could not have been unaware that they were instituting a change in the legal practice of their day. The very fact that they discussed the matter is evidence of their awareness. To call that change "unconscious" in the sense that it did not involve a conscious choice between alternatives is absurd.

What is meant by "unconscious evolution" is that those who proposed the change in practice believed that they were not amending the law but giving a correct interpretation of its original intent. They assumed that somehow, in the course of time, the law had come to be interpreted wrongly, and they were restoring its true meaning. They could believe that to be true, because they lacked the historic sense. The development of a historical perspective is a very recent phenomenon. Had the rabbis of the Talmud possessed it, they would have realized the radical difference between their own ideas of justice and those of an earlier age. This lack of historical consciousness is all that can be correctly referred to when we say that, in the past, the evolution of Jewish law was unconscious.

Nowadays, however, we have not only a historical consciousness but a historical con-

science. That inevitably prevents us from arbitrarily reading into an ancient tradition whatever we happen to think true or just. When, therefore, we find ourselves without corroboration or precedent in tradition for what we regard as true or just, we must seek to give effect to it, even though that involves a deliberate departure from traditional norms. To refuse to do so would be to turn our back on truth and justice. To do so is what we mean by "conscious" change.

For example, there can be no question that, in traditional Jewish law and ritual, woman does not enjoy equal status with man in respect to marriage and divorce, inheritance, the right to give evidence in court, etc. Since we cannot honestly assume that the laws as formulated in the traditional codes meant women to enjoy that equality, we must, if we believe in the equality of the sexes, make the necessary changes in law and custom as a conscious and deliberate amendment to earlier standards. This is an example of a planned reconstruction of Jewish law and Jewish life.

3. Is not Reconstructionism merely an attempt to adjust Judaism to the environment? Must not a Judaism that aims to be vital endeavor rather to change the environment?

Reconstructionism, far from advocating mere compliance with environmental conditions, calls for a more deliberate attempt to change the

environment than does the traditional approach to Judaism. The traditional standpoint assumes that it is possible to change the environment by merely exerting will power, particularly if that exertion is in line with what tradition regards as the revealed will of God. According to Reconstructionism, however, mere will power, even when reinforced by religious faith, is not enough. We have also to understand the environment before we can effect any change in it. Without knowing the natural forces at work in the social and mental life of the world we live in, we cannot know either how to ward off those forces that are hostile to the achievement of Jewish ideals or how to cooperate with those that are helpful. Mere wishing and insisting will not change the environment to suit our purposes; that is why Reconstructionism stresses intelligent planning and action in the adjustment of means to ends.

Specifically, the revival of Judaism, as Reconstructionism understands it, requires changes not only in the structure and functioning of Jewish communal life, but also in the understanding of what constitutes Judaism. More than that; Reconstructionism requires changes in the entire conception of the nature of religion in general and the role of the historic in civilization. Indeed, the Reconstructionist program requires such radical changes in the social, cultural and religious life of mankind, as almost to seem utopian. It is saved from utopianism

only by its insistence on reckoning with the world as it is, in the effort to transform it into the world as it ought to be.

Reconstructionism cannot be charged with being a way of life that follows the path of least resistance. Adjustment to the environment is indeed its method, but what it seeks is not a passive adjustment but one that is creative and adventuresome.

4. Why should the reconstruction of Judaism be urged upon Jews who have no Judaism left to reconstruct?

While Reconstructionism has an approach to those Jews who are already identified with Jewish life, it addresses itself also to Jews who, though teetering on the brink of assimilation, have not yet taken the plunge. Such Jews constitute today a large percentage of Diaspora Jewry. One encounters them even in the membership of our congregations, which they have joined from other than religious motives. The reintegration of Jews in organic communities would make them feel part of a living people playing an active role in contemporary life. Moreover, Reconstructionism's revision of Jewish ritual practice in accordance with acceptable criteria of evaluation would help them retain their loyalty by stressing the relevance of many traditional forms to contemporary spiritual needs and ideals.

Even those who feel that they have left Judaism behind and have no further use for it can, in many instances, be brought back to Jewish loyalty, unless they have been assimilated so thoroughly that they are no longer known to be Jews. Jews need Judaism even though they are not always aware of that need. They need a sense of status, of belonging to some recognized historical group that assumes responsibility for their welfare, makes demands on their loyalty and accepts them as naturally belonging to it. Only the Jewish people can confer that status on Jews, since the non-Jewish world looks upon them as social and spiritual "outsiders." The Jew needs fellowship, comradely relations with those who share with him common memories, common interests and common aspirations. And the Jew needs religious orientation, the feeling that he has something to live for beyond the satisfaction of merely appetitive wants, and that these holier purposes are clues to the destiny of man and the will of the Creator. Only Jewish religion can satisfy the religious needs of the Jew, because only that religion can help him to utilize the fact of his having been born a Jew as a means of serving the highest interests of humanity.

When alienated Jews are made aware of their needs as Jews, they discover that it is only a reconstructed Judaism that can satisfy those needs, since only such a Judaism

imposes no condition of loyalty which demands blind conformity to authoritarian tradition.

5. Since only a small minority of Jews are actively concerned with the continuance of Jewish life, is it possible to overcome the inertia of the indifferent Jews and the assimilationists?

Arnold Toynbee has the correct answer to this question—not in his estimate of Judaism as a “fossil civilization,” but in his recognition of the tremendous power that is often exercised in history by a militant minority. Again and again in history, a crisis which threatened the life of a civilization has been averted by an active minority that knew what it wanted.

Our Prophets were aware of this fact when they stressed the idea of the saving remnant (*she’ar yashuv*). They did not mean that the remnant should sever itself from the rest of the people and seek a selfish salvation. They were convinced that even a small minority that possessed true insight into the action which was necessary (though it might not be able to prevent the loss to Judaism of great numbers of individuals) could sufficiently activate those in whom there was a spark of true Judaism to insure its perpetuation. Many individuals might be lost, perhaps a majority, but enough would remain to carry on the life of the people and its hallowed ideals.

There is almost no limit to the influence which an alert and active Jewish minority could exert

in effecting not only the survival but the revival of Jewish life in our age.

6. Reconstructionism has been described as abstract, intellectual and lacking in emotion. Can it then appeal to the ordinary person?

The fact that Reconstructionism has an intellectual appeal should surely not be held against it. But that does not mean that it is abstract or lacking in emotion.

Consider the practical program of Reconstructionism. Is its emphasis on the upbuilding of Israel and on making Israel the hub of Jewish civilization abstract and lacking in emotion?

Is its stressing the need for translating the idea of Jewish unity into a concrete, organic communal structure abstract and lacking in emotional appeal?

Does its insistence on ritual practice, to the maximum that is compatible with sincere belief and with the actual conditions under which Judaism in our day must be lived, show no concern for the wealth of poetry and sentiment in the traditional regimen of observance?

And what about Reconstructionism's stress on the Hebrew language? Abstract concepts are readily conveyed in translation. Insistence on the retention and cultivation of the Hebrew language is based obviously on an appreciation of the emotional overtones of words and

idioms which are inevitably lost in translation. Nothing so well as a common language can give a people the deep feeling of belonging together and sharing a common history and destiny. Reconstructionism regards this as one of the most important values of Jewish religion.

Moreover, what movement has emphasized more than Reconstructionism the importance of giving significant expression through the arts to the emotional experiences of our people?

The only possible basis for regarding Reconstructionism as abstract is that it allows for various conceptions of God as inspiration for our religious ideals. These conceptions range from the Orthodox to the humanist. Many who assume that there can be only one possible conception of God are offended by such latitude. They assume that God must be conceived as "personal" in the traditional sense, and regard all other conceptions as cold and abstract. But if we value Jewish unity we must accept diversity in the conception of God as legitimate, for otherwise we would be excluding all Jews whose theology is different from our own. Reconstructionism therefore insists only that whatever conception we hold be held with sincerity. By stressing sincerity of conviction rather than unanimity of creedal profession, it encourages every individual Jew to seek and adhere to that idea of God which best answers his personal needs, both emotional and intellectual.

7. If the purpose of Judaism is to enable the Jew to fulfil himself as a human being, can he not achieve that purpose through humanism?

We need have recourse to Judaism, which is the civilization of the Jewish people, because one can become fully human only through the historic group to which one belongs. When a person regards the historic group, be it people or church to which he belongs, as incapable of affording him the means of achieving his full humanity, he may have reason for leaving it and looking elsewhere for his salvation. It is a moot question, however, whether under those circumstances he would not be acting more ethically, or more humanly, if instead of leaving his own group, he would try to raise it to a higher level of life. In any event, the normal thing for a Jew to do, from the standpoint of humanism itself, is to develop his own personality by helping the Jewish people become what it has always aspired to be.

The process of becoming human is mediated not through the totality of mankind (for who can make himself at home in all the varied civilizations of the world?) but through the historic groups into which it is divided. What is needed is that every people should so reconstruct its civilization as to make of it an instrument for universal freedom, justice and peace.

American Jews, who belong to two civilizations, have to utilize both civilizations, the

American and the Jewish, for their self-fulfilment as human beings.

8. Does being Jews make us more ethical?

Our Jewishness should exercise an ethical influence on our lives, but unfortunately it does not always do so. If we look back to our history as a people, we find in it no reason to suppose that, man for man, Jews were any more ethical in their personal relations than men and women of other ethnic or religious groups. In the literature of the Prophets, there are many passages bitterly condemning the unethical behavior of their contemporaries. In such passages as Isaiah 1:21-23, 5:11-23; Jeremiah 2:33-34, 5:1; Hosea 7:1-4, to name but a few, the Prophets condemn the robbery, bloodshed, lying, cheating and adulteries of the people. There is also evidence in the Torah that Jews were not untainted by the same crimes and vices that prevailed among other peoples. But this is true: that the Torah and the Prophets fastened upon the Jewish people a sense of guilt in connection with unethical conduct of all sorts.

In our day, however, Jews have largely lost that sense of guilt and have accepted as normal those low standards of honesty, integrity and just dealing which are condoned by the con-

ventional mores of the rest of the world. That is an alarming situation. Unless Judaism can sensitize us to the absolute distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, all our ado about it is mere pretense.

We must recover the sense of sin, in connection with all forms of dishonesty, all mean advantages that we take of our neighbors in our own interest. But, having recovered the sense of sin, we must not stop there. To ascribe our misdeeds to "original sin" and to depend on a divine miracle of grace to reform and purify us, as is the tendency in much of contemporary religious thinking, will not help us. One of the dangers we must guard against is the inclination to think that the pangs of remorse which we may feel at times absolve us from the need of genuine *teshuvah*, which means a change in our whole standard of values and pattern of behavior in our relations with our fellow men.

Unless Judaism can give us the inspiration and guidance for such a change, there is no chance of its surviving in the Diaspora, for it can offer us nothing else that is worth the effort and the sacrifices necessary to maintain it.

To study the human situations in which Jews find themselves as men and as Jews and to devise codes of ethical action for such situations should henceforth be the primary aim of Jewish study and scholarship.

9. Why should not living as a Jew be a matter of individual preference, free from all affiliations and involvements in group life?

If we reflect on the meaning of the term Jew, we perceive the self-contradiction in trying to live as a Jew without Jewish affiliation or responsibilities to the Jewish people. The word Jew is not a functional term like the words laborer, artist or scientist. A man who labors, who paints beautiful pictures or who studies natural objects is a laborer, an artist or a scientist, as the case may be, whether or not there are others like him. But nobody can be a soldier without an army, a citizen without a state, or a kinsman without kindred. Similarly one cannot be a Jew apart from the Jewish people.

Unless, therefore, the Jewish collectivity has status, being identified as a Jew is bound to render one an enigma. Unless such a collective status can be attained for Jewry, it is impossible to answer Arthur Koestler's argument for the total assimilation of Jewry elsewhere than in Israel:

"I am in favor of Jews becoming assimilated with and absorbed by the countries in which they live," he wrote some time ago. "I think it is high time to liquidate the anachronism of a separate community all over the world, which cannot be defined either as a separate race or nation or religious sect, and whose insistence

on remaining in one way apart has led to an unparalleled chain of massacres, persecutions, and expulsions for fifteen hundred years."

Without a definition of the Jewish collective unity, the Jew does not know how to act as a Jew, nor to what his Jewishness demands that he be loyal. The conception of world Jewry as a people points to the direction where such questions may find an answer. Sharing the life of a people that has admittedly played an important role in history and wishes to continue to play such a role is certain to elicit the best in those who belong to that people. That is how participation in communal life transforms man from a purely natural into a spiritual being.

It is true that loyalty to a people may degenerate into chauvinism. All loyalties are capable of abuse, if misapplied. But that is no argument against loyalty. Criticism of one's own group, such as that exercised by our Prophets, is a wiser manifestation of loyalty, when inspired, as in their case, by love than is the collective self-praise and megalomania of the chauvinist. Loyalty to one's people is a virtue, provided it function within the frame-work of loyalty to mankind and as an expression of that "loyalty to loyalty" in which Josiah Royce saw the supreme ethical principle. Loyalty that is ethical is not jealous of other loyalties, provided they, too, are ethical.

PART TWO:

Jewish Peoplehood

10. Is Jewish birth the basic qualification for being a Jew?

No. Being born a Jew is doubtless the most natural condition which results in one's being a Jew, but it is not the most basic qualification. Many persons born Jewish have become *renegades*, and have often evinced the greatest hostility to Judaism. On the other hand, many converts to Judaism have been distinguished by their understanding of Judaism and by their devotion to it.

The basic qualifications for being a Jew are (1) the identification of oneself as a Jew, i.e., the acceptance of the Jewish people in the past, the present and the future as one's own people; (2) belief in the spiritual values of the Jewish tradition, i.e., the conviction that the Jewish spiritual heritage affords inspiration for living, and constitutes a worthy contribution to the totality of man's spiritual wisdom; and (3) participation in Jewish life, i.e., sharing in those activities which help to insure the perpetuation of the Jewish people and the advancement of its civilization.

These qualifications, and not Jewish parentage, have been stressed in the bulk of our tradition. Jews were enjoined to qualify themselves for the study of Torah (i.e., Judaism) "because it is not subject to inheritance." Con-

verts, on the other hand, were told to address God in worship, in the same terms as born Jews as "our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob," because converts "na-asu ikkar k'yisrael" (are regarded as authentic Jews).

11. What is meant by "status", as applied to the Jews?

The Jews of the Diaspora are not a nation in the accepted sense of the term today, neither are they a race, nor merely a religious communion. They are today without status. They do not themselves know exactly what it means to be a Jew, and nobody else can tell them. Jews who want to remain Jews are entitled to feel part of a definable and identifiable social entity.

The establishment of the state of Israel has not solved the problem of what is the status of Jews in the Diaspora. It does not answer the question: What distinguishes a secularist Israeli Jew from a secularist Israeli non-Jew, and what has such a Jew in common with a Diaspora Jew, whether secularist or religious?

Not to know what sort of a group we belong to means not to know our place in mankind, indeed, not to have a place in mankind except one that others may assign to us.

Jews in the Diaspora sorely need public recognition by n a m e of that which constitutes

their group unity and individuality. Such recognition is a prerequisite to their being accepted by the world at large as a factor in civilization and to the acceptance of Judaism by their own children.

Reconstructionists are in the habit of designating that which unites all Jews as *peoplehood*. A people may be defined as "a chain of generations united by a common history and culture the origin of which can be traced to a common land." If we will accept that concept of peoplehood as descriptive of what the Jews are, and if we will publicly proclaim our acceptance of it, and organize our collective life on the basis of that conception, the world, too, will have to recognize us for what we are. We shall then have achieved status.

Unless and until Jews achieve status, they will be like people suffering from amnesia, who do not know who they are or what sort of persons they are, because they do not know to whom they belong.

12. How can it be said that Jews lack status in America, if they have the status of citizenship and are members of a specific religious group?

It is true that American Jews as individuals have the status of American citizens, but, as it has been pointed out, they have no status as Jews. To have status as Jews, it would be necessary that both they and the non-Jews un-

derstand to what sort of group the Jews belong. As long as Jews themselves are in doubt about the nature of the Jewish group, whether it is a religious, ethnic or cultural group, the term Jew can have only a negative meaning for them; it can only mean not being like everybody else in the general population. It is especially important in bringing up our children that we be able to make clear to them what sort of a group it is to which we expect them as Jews to give loyalty and devotion. That is what we mean by giving them Jewish status.

To be sure, the Jews figure in the minds of non-Jews as a religious group. But not all Jews are religious, and those Jews who are religious have other Jewish interests in common besides religion. Thus, to assign to Jews the status merely of a religious group creates confusion in our neighbors' minds. Our neighbors are prevented by this error from understanding such fundamental aspects of the Jewish civilization as the Jewish attachment to Eretz Yisrael and the Hebrew language, since according to the prevailing conception these have nothing to do with religion.

13. What shall Jews do to achieve the status of a people?

Representatives of Jews from all parts of the world would have to gather to discuss the place of the Jewish people in the world. Every coun-

try in which Jews reside in significant numbers, and every school of opinion in regard to the future of Jewry would have to be represented at such a conference.

What the agenda of the conference should be is not for us to determine. It will choose its own agenda. It seems most feasible for the conference to seek for Jewry the status of a unique international society based not on common political objectives, but on common cultural and spiritual goals. It would be a society in which the entire history and experience of the Jewish people in the past would generate a pattern of Jewish life that would give purpose and meaning to Jewish life wherever Jews reside. The very concept of *p e o p l e h o o d* might have to acquire a new content to suit the needs of Jews under the various circumstances in which the dispersion now places them.

In the new status, the Jewish community of Israel would naturally occupy a central position because of the unique opportunities it has for cultural and spiritual creativity.

14. Do you envisage any kind of formal instrument like a charter or constitution for the Jewish people?

Not being political in character, the Jewish people does not need a charter or constitution that provides sanctions for the enforcement of its provisions. Nevertheless, from such a gathering as is envisaged, there should emerge some

statement of common aims and purposes and some provisions for implementing those aims which would have moral authority for those who acquiesce in them.

Such a statement would have to reckon with the different conditions under which Jewries of different lands must live, and would assign to them appropriate roles to play in the realization of the common ends. Thus, though in all communities the task of Jewish education would be primary, the content and methods of Jewish education would vary in accordance with these differences. The same is true of Jewish religion, which would have to be so defined as to make allowances for naturalist and humanist as well as supernaturalist conceptions of it. The formulation for each region of its responsibility to the totality of Jewish life would then set the pattern for the local organic communities through which Judaism would become a living reality for the individual Jew.

The idea of a solemn covenant by which Jews bind themselves to carry out common purposes is no new one in Jewish history. Thus the birth of our people was solemnized by the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 24:4-7). Their entry into the land was the occasion of a renewal of the covenant under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 5:2-8). The reforms instituted by King Josiah upon discovery of the "Book of the Law" in the Temple were inaugurated by a covenant (2 Kings 22:8-23:3). And when Ezra and Nehe-

miah came from Babylon to give a new lease on life to the struggling community that initiated the second Jewish commonwealth in the land of Israel, they again gathered the people for that solemn covenant which made the Pentateuch the basic authority for Judaism (Nehemiah 8:1-10:40). The crisis created in our day by reason of our lack of status, combined with the new opportunities resulting from the establishment of the State of Israel, is surely sufficient occasion for a renewal of the covenant in terms of present day realities.

15.

Please define more specifically what is meant by a "people". What, for example, would be the people to whom a French Canadian belongs? Would it be the French people to whom he traces his ancestry, the Catholic Church in which he is religiously rooted, the Canadian people with whom he shares a common citizenship, or the British Commonwealth of Nations of which Canada is a member?

It has already been pointed out that a people is "a chain of generations united by a common history and culture the origin of which can be traced to life in a particular land." To the extent that the various groups with which the individual French-Canadian identifies himself conform to this definition, they may be considered peoples. The idea that the same person can belong to more than one people is a

new one that has emerged with the development of social and cultural democracy. It is a natural outgrowth of the inalienable right to "the pursuit of happiness." This distinguishes the concept of peoplehood from that of political nationhood, since it is obvious that at present one cannot owe political allegiance to more than one national government. But one may, and in democracies most people do, identify oneself with more than one spiritual or cultural people.

16. Is either the World Jewish Congress or the World Zionist Organization the proper instrument to effect international Jewish peoplehood?

No organization is today in a position to establish the status of Jewish peoplehood. Before any organization can do that, a prolonged process of education is necessary to familiarize Jews with the meaning, the need and the implications of Jewish peoplehood in the modern world. Without such a preparation, the attempt to organize world Jewry is apt to be confined to mere mechanics and to be vitiated by extraneous issues, while fundamental intrinsic needs of the Jewish people are left unsatisfied.

Assuming that such an educational program has been successfully pursued and the Jewish public has come to recognize the need, the value and the method of functioning as an international people, it would then be desirable

from a practical point of view for some Jewish international organization already in existence to undertake the task of creating the instrumentalities through which Jewish world unity could be expressed and become operative. We have at present two international organizations that operate on the assumption that the Jews are a people—the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization. Which of these should then undertake the task?

Each performs a necessary function. The WJC concerns itself with the defense of Jewish rights and freedom wherever these are denied or endangered in the Diaspora; the WZO concerns itself with the needs of the Jewish community of Israel as the spiritual and cultural center of world Jewry. Since each of these functions is involved in the conception of Jewish peoplehood as it must operate in the modern world, common sense suggests the eventual merger of the two organizations. But what is so uncommon as common sense?

17. Since there is as yet no unity in local Jewish communal life, is it not premature to speak of organizing for world unity and status?

It is not premature, because the two unities, world and local, are mutually dependent. To have an integrated organic local community, we should have Jews know themselves as belonging to a people with universally acknowl-

edged status. On the other hand, to have Jews know themselves in that way presupposes the existence of locally integrated organic communities. Nowadays, when we have neither the one nor the other, what is the wisest procedure? To go ahead with each as if the other were already in existence. Otherwise we shall never make a start.

We must remember that organic means reckoning with the totality of the organism. The distinguishing characteristic of an organism is that the individual organs and cells that constitute it can operate normally only in relation to the entire body, and the entire body in turn is dependent for its life on the healthy functioning of all the organs and cells.

Without the envisagement, therefore, of a functioning Jewish people united by the awareness of a common past and of a common destiny, no individual Jewish community can have any clear understanding of its interests or any concerted plan of action.

18. Will not any organization of the Jews as a people aggravate anti-Semitism and give body to the charge that the Jews conspire to dominate the world?

We Jews must make up our minds about our own needs as Jews. Having done so, we should seek to satisfy those needs in every way that is in accord with our own highest spiritual ideals without fear of the consequences. To be sure,

we should endeavor to avoid, wherever possible, conduct that might lead to a misunderstanding of our purposes or cause needless irritation to others, but we must not be diverted from our legitimate purposes because our enemies may not like what we are doing.

Every serious study of anti-Semitism has shown that it is an irrational phobia, which cannot be cured by any form of Jewish behavior. Whatever Jews do to improve their own lot is bound to be resented by the anti-Semite. This applies not only to Jewish efforts to insure the survival of the Jewish people but equally to the efforts of Jews to be assimilated. If we are convinced that Jewish unity is a requisite of our personal happiness and self-fulfillment, we must not let anti-Semitism intimidate us and deter us from carrying out our plans for unifying Jewry.

19.

Why should Judaism be centered in Israel and not in America where Reconstructionist theory has been developed?

The greatest strides in the reconstruction of Jewish life have already been made in Israel.

The basic idea underlying the Reconstructionist program is that, henceforth, the Jewish people must not simply accept passively their inherited status and inherited tradition, nor must they depend on a miraculous divine intervention to redeem them. They must assume responsibility for improving their own lot and

solving their own problems, spiritual and material, by natural means. The role of Jewish religion must be to give Jews the faith that nature itself is so divinely constituted as to be capable of reinforcing their strivings and those of all other men toward the creation of a better world.

One need only compare the modern Zionist movement with the various Messianic movements of the Middle Ages to perceive that the Zionist movement, with its employment of natural technical and social means in the redemption of the Jewish people, is itself the first step in the necessary reconstruction of Jewish life. All the great achievements of Israel—the reclamation of the desert, the transportation of the immigrants, the defense against aggression, and, above all, the creation of a democratic state—are the result of planned efforts at reconstruction.

In America, Reconstructionism is still in the talking stage. To be sure, we in this country have developed the theory of Reconstructionism more fully than in Israel. In Israel, the people are too beset by problems needing immediate and vigorous action to give enough time for reflective philosophical thinking or planning. But they have acted, knowingly or unknowingly, on Reconstructionist principles and have achieved marvels. We American Jews, with all our philosophizing about the reconstruction of Jew-

ish life, have scarcely begun to implement our philosophy. Only if and when we shall have created in this country an organic Jewish community actively operating to insure the perpetuation and development of the Jewish religious civilization, will we be justified in claiming an achievement comparable with the establishment of the State of Israel.

20. How does the Reconstructionist movement view the relation of the State of Israel to Judaism?

One of the main purposes of Reconstructionism is to come to grips with this very problem. People commonly speak of the State of Israel as the Jewish State. That is natural because it is the state of a people, of whom the vast majority are Jews. But to speak of it as the Jewish State is misleading and incorrect. The State of Israel is obviously not the state to which Jews living elsewhere owe any political allegiance. It is not their state. To speak of it as the Jewish State, therefore, would by implication read American Jews out of the Jewish people.

Moreover, the State of Israel is committed to the democratic principle that the state belongs to all its citizens and may not discriminate against any of them in respect to their rights on ground of race, religion or national origin. The fact that the Jews in most countries belong to a minority which insists on those rights should make the Jewish people as a whole

sensitive to the importance of these principles. It should prevent the Jewish community in Israel from taking an undue advantage of its majority status, and acting as if the state were its monopoly.

It is expected that the history and culture of the Jewish people will tend, in the long run, to predominate and that even the Moslem and Christian elements will tend to be acculturated to the Jewish majority. But that must not be forced. Nor should any obstacles be put in the way of those native non-Jewish cultures exerting an influence on the Jewish community. In all probability, Israel will remain predominantly Jewish culturally. That does not mean, however, that the influence of the other communities in Israel need be a negligible one. It means merely that it will have to be consistent with the unity of the State.

As a consequence of this inevitable development, the existence of the State of Israel is of vital concern to all Jewry. It is not, however, the State of Israel but the Jewish community of Israel that will constitute the nucleus of world Jewry. Through its influence on the State, the Jewish community of Israel will validate and fulfil the main ideas of Judaism. That is different from having the State serve as a directive influence on Jewish life, in a way similar to the Vatican's influence on Catholic life. The Jewish community in Israel will, it is hoped, be able to exert a moral influence

on all of Jewry. But it will do that not through the agency of the State, but through the abundance of cultural and spiritual values which it is bound to produce in its day-to-day coping with the realities of life.

Since the State of Israel must not be counted on to be a t h e o c r a t i c state, governed by a supernaturally revealed Law, but will have to be a d e m o c r a t i c state governed by laws, in the making of which non-Jews will have a share, Judaism, as the religious civilization of the e n t i r e Jewish people, must detach its destiny from any kind of a p o l i t i c a l state. This points to the urgency for world Jewry to reconstitute itself as an organic people by means of a newly drawn covenant. Such a covenant would have to redefine the status of world Jewry in terms free of all associations with a p o l i t i c a l state in the present or in the future. Not the State of Israel but the L a n d of Israel is the seat and source of Judaism.

21. What can an Israeli Jew derive from Reconstructionism to help him live a Jewish life in Israel?

Two aspects of Reconstructionism are of tremendous importance for Jewish life in Israel. The first of these is emphasis on the concept of K e l a l Y i s r a e l , or the entire Jewish people, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, as

the body with which a Jew must identify himself in order to be a Jew.

This Reconstructionist principle is the antithesis of the tendency in certain quarters to regard the State of Israel as synonymous with the Jewish people. It is the antithesis of the tendency to regard all Jews of the Diaspora as disloyal to Judaism, if they do not plan to settle in Israel or to train their children to settle there.

Such a tendency spells the repudiation of all that the Jewish people has achieved in the Diaspora. It cuts off the roots of Jewish inspiration, and ultimately undermines the ethical claim of the Jewish people to its land. That claim rests on the identification of all the Jews of the world with the same people that produced the Bible and the spiritual values of the post-Biblical Jewish tradition.

Judaism is the product of people, not of a state, of people bound together by common memories, common interests and common hopes and aspiring to realize those common hopes by organized voluntary cooperation. The Moslem and Christian communities of Israel have, in common with the Jews of Israel, interests in the security and economic welfare which the State, backed by its military and police power, can effect. Similarly, Jews in America have in common with their Christian fellow-citizens many political, economic and cultural interests. But what makes American Jews and the Jews of Israel one people is the Jewish re-

ligious civilization. This it is which differentiates Jews from Christians and Moslems both in Israel and in America.

Reconstructionism holds that for the Jews in the Diaspora to accept permanent self-identification with the nations among which they dwell calls for a renewal of the covenant of Jewish peoplehood and for the creation of institutions enabling all Jews to collaborate in the achievement of common spiritual and cultural aims throughout the world. This means the recognition by Israeli Jewry of the Jews of the Diaspora as brothers and as equals.

The second aspect of Reconstructionism that is of tremendous import for Israeli Jewry grows out of the first. It is a new approach to Jewish religion.

Jewish religion must be regarded as the sum of all those aspects of Jewish civilization which impel Jews to make the most of their lives or to achieve salvation. That means recognizing the validity of holiness no less than of righteousness. That calls for belief in God as a matter of personal experience. Obviously, religion, so conceived, cannot be subject to coercion. One cannot compel a person to experience the Sabbath as holy, by forcing its observance upon him against his will. It should not be the function of the State to compel religious observance. The State should merely protect the right to such observance by those Jews who desire it.

Obviously, too, the Reconstructionist definition of religion covers many varieties of religious belief and practice that do not conform to the ideas of the religious parties in Israel. It challenges their monopoly of religion and their right to use the machinery of the State and its police power to impose their standards on others.

Modern religion must recognize the democratic principle of freedom of conscience and its corollary, the right of people to differ in their standards of belief and practice.

The unity of Jewish religion must henceforward be based not on uniformity, but on the common purpose of religious Jews, through voluntary cooperation, to make of Jewish life the best kind of life that they can conceive and achieve. Striving for that kind of life is what is meant by serving God.

22. Is it reasonable to assume that the Jewish future in America is more secure because of the rebirth of Israel?

If by "the security of the Jewish future", is meant the possibility of maintaining a thriving Judaism, the answer is unhesitatingly, Yes.

To prove how true that is, imagine what the Jewish future in this country would look like, if there were no State of Israel, nor any prospect of establishing one. There would then be no common aim for which Jews everywhere, with all their diversities of belief and practice,

could strive as a means of giving expression to the spiritual, social and moral potentialities of their three-thousand year old tradition. Without the opportunity of demonstrating what Judaism that has a free field for itself can do to further social and spiritual progress, the Jewish people is like a musical genius who lacks an instrument on which to play.

The establishment of the State of Israel thus means for Jews everywhere, and notably in America, an instrument by which the Jewish people is enabled to play a significant role in human civilization and demonstrate the validity of its holiest ideals. By making Jewish life more worth living, it serves to maintain the loyalty and devotion of Jews everywhere to their heritage and insures its continuation and enhancement.

23. Is it not true that Israel, as a nation, must have an army and all the characteristics of nationalism which we decry?

The State of Israel, like all other states in the modern world, must have a defense force. Even if its independence were guaranteed by other powers, it could not avoid dependence on military force for its security. There is certainly no greater moral virtue in being defended by a foreign army than by one's own.

The mere possession of armed forces does not necessarily render a State militarist or aggressively nationalistic. Nationalism, in the

sense of national patriotism is certainly not a vice, unless loyalty to the nation calls for such supreme and unquestioning loyalty to the State as to demand the subordination to it of one's conscience and religion.

Israel's defense forces should never be used for expansionist purposes. For that matter, neither should those of the United States. But it is morally wrong, in the present condition of the world, for any nation to invite aggression by its inability to defend itself. Not the possession of force, but its utilization for aggressive purposes is morally reprehensible. It is true that the possession of force provides occasions and temptations to use it aggressively. But occasions and temptations are a lesser evil than the certainty of being the helpless victim of a ruthless aggressor.

24.

Reconstructionist literature states that living in two civilizations simultaneously is without precedent. Did not the Jews of Babylonia, of the Greco-Roman world, and of Medieval Spain also have to live in two civilizations at the same time?

No, they did not. Though they lived in the midst of other civilizations and perhaps borrowed some of their cultural traits, they did not think of themselves as belonging to those civilizations, nor were they expected to belong.

All pre-modern civilizations were identified with specific religions. The Jews were per-

mitted to live among these civilizations as a completely autonomous group, except that, for the privilege of domicile, they had to pay a collective tax or tribute to the State. All such functions as education, social services, economic regulation, policing of morals, which in modern civilizations have been relegated, in whole or in part, to the State, were, in pre-modern times, discharged or controlled by religious bodies; in the case of the Jews, by the *k e - h i l l a h* or Jewish community.

The relation of the Jews to the State being that of a tolerated (or persecuted) alien community, Jews living under ancient or medieval regimes, did not, as in modern democratic states, have the opportunity, the privilege or the responsibility of sharing in the spiritual and cultural interests of the host nation; they were not partners in its civilization.

25. Is there validity to the charge that Reconstructionists advocate cultural autonomy for Jewish life in this country, and thereby import from abroad something utterly irrelevant to the American scene?

The Reconstructionist movement does not favor cultural autonomy which generally implies minority group status. Reconstructionism is definitely opposed to the *p o l i t i c a l* recognition of minority groups in this country. The religio-cultural solidarity it advocates for Jews

is the analogue of the solidarity of the various churches. Insofar as the Jewish community is ready to accept any non-Jew who is willing to identify himself as a Jew, it cannot be charged with exclusiveness. There is as little reason to deprecate Jewish solidarity as to deprecate Church solidarity.

Unfortunately, what we have at present is only a phantom solidarity but not a living one. We have *ad hoc* organizations for specific purposes, but no means of fostering the organic unity of all who wish to remain Jews. That deprives us of what is most essential to give meaning and relevance to our cultural and spiritual heritage. We cannot have any reason for cherishing the feeling that comes with having a common past or looking forward toward a common destiny, if our unity with other Jews is more in the consciousness of non-Jews than in our own consciousness.

If that unity is to exert a wholesome influence on our lives, it must grow out of something more than a passive acceptance. It must be translated into permanent form of interaction for the highest cultural and spiritual purposes of all who experience it. Such organic Jewish community, embodied in local organic communities, in no wise prevents Jews from participating fully in the life of America. Nothing is further from Reconstructionist thinking than to have Jews renounce the benefit, or

deny the responsibility, of sharing the common life of America.

26. Can Jewish lay organizations be depended upon to cooperate for the perpetuation of American Jewish life?

Probably most of the interests that Jewish laymen today have in Jewish life concern those areas in which lay organizations are active—aid to Israel, overseas relief, combatting anti-Semitism, social service, Jewish Center work and the like. Even Jews affiliated with the synagogue are, as a rule, more interested in these activities than in those which are the special concern of the synagogue, such as worship and Jewish study.

One cannot write off those lay organizations. They are doing work that is essential for Jewish life, work that the congregations could not do as ably. The whole development of modern life requires specialization in the interest of efficiency. To fail to reckon with these communal agencies in organizing Jewish life would be like trying to build an army with nothing but a corps of chaplains or a military band. The synagogue can stimulate the morale, but cannot produce the manpower and equipment for Jewish survival.

To be sure, at the present time, most of the leaders of our lay organizations are entirely preoccupied with the particular purposes of their institutions and do not care about in-

tegrating them with the larger purposes of Jewish life. That is due to three factors: (1) the failure of Jewish education which has left most of the younger generation without any Jewish background, (2) the negative attitude of many rabbis, who, rightly or wrongly, doubt the possibility of any one's being interested in Judaism, and (3) the failure of our institutions of higher learning to realize the revolution that has taken place in the organization of Jewish life and to recognize the need for training professional personnel for all kinds of Jewish service.

None of these difficulties is insurmountable.

27. Would it not be best to look to the synagogue to constitute the community, since the other functional agencies seem to be lacking in Jewish folk spirit?

As matters stand today, not all synagogues show a Jewish folk spirit, nor do all secular movements lack it.

Most congregations, because they need considerable funds, if they are to do effective work, are limited in membership to people of means and have little contact with the economically poorer classes. A certain degree of social snobishness thus tends to color the outlook of the congregations. Moreover, exaggerated institutional and partisan loyalties, which are stressed in Jewish religious circles, militate

against the full expression of an over-all loyalty to the Jewish people and its civilization.

On the other hand, non-synagogue groups such as the Yiddishist labor groups, the Histadrut Ivrit, and certain Zionist circles have shown a profound interest in maintaining the integrity of the Jewish people and the continuity of its history.

It is true, however, that the synagogue is, by its very emphasis on religion, committed to the perpetuation of Jewry and Judaism. The synagogues, therefore, should take the lead in the effort to establish the organic Jewish community. They must do this, as already indicated, by de-sectarianizing themselves and showing themselves both willing and able to transcend their organizational differences and to collaborate in making religion a communal instead of a congregational concern.

28. What inner change must our existing organizations undergo to promote Jewish unity and folk spirit?

The congregations must de-sectarianize themselves and the lay organizations must religionize themselves.

Members of congregations must be made to feel that they are primarily members of the Jewish people, and only secondarily members of a particular congregation, or even of a particular religious sect in Judaism such as Orthodoxy, Conservatism or Reform. To effect this, they

must not permit differences of religious ideas and practices to prevent their continuous co-operation with other religious and non-religious Jewish groups for all those Jewish interests that they have in common. The many artificial barriers that have been set up by rival institutions have prevented such collaboration even among Jews whose points of view on fundamentals are hardly at variance.

Religion, like Jewish education, on which there are also different opinions based on varying interpretations of Judaism, must be made a community affair and not merely a congregational one. That does not mean that there need be any interference with the ideological or ritual expression of any congregation or congregational union, nor that any individual or group that sees no need for formal religion must be forced into conformity. It means only that the community shall provide the facilities for religious expression for all Jews in accordance with their own felt needs and the dictates of their own consciences.

To religionize the secular agencies of the Jewish community means to have them contribute not only to the effective discharge of the particular aims to which they are devoted, but also to the general aim of perpetuating Jewish civilization or Judaism. As a religious civilization, Judaism aims to make the experience of communal living of the Jewish people, past and present, a means to individual and

collective salvation or self-realization. All of the so-called secular institutions must serve that end in addition to whatever may constitute the particular aim of each.

Every Jewish institution and movement must interest itself in the totality of Jewish life and subordinate its particular aims to the general aim. At the present time, that is not always the case. Some organizations have been dominated by a leadership which is indifferent, if not hostile, to the very idea of perpetuating the Jewish people. They are therefore reluctant to cooperate, except in fund-raising, with other Jewish institutions and movements, and they obstruct the development of organic community. The only way to change this situation is by Jews' insisting on leaders who take an affirmative attitude to Jewish life, and by making provision for the professional training of such a leadership.

29. Will not the Reconstructionist view that democracy requires accepting diversity in belief and practice as normal inevitably lead to division?

The idea underlying democracy is that the interests which unite human beings, if they are well aware of those interests, are strong enough to deprive differences of their divisive power. Difficult as it is to get along with people, it is impossible to get along without them. By the same token, difficult as it may be for

some Jews to get along with their fellow-Jews, they cannot dispense with them or ignore them, except to their own hurt. All human beings have the need to belong to some group that accepts them as a matter of course, that assumes a degree of responsibility for their welfare, and that in return makes demands on their loyalty and devotion. Such belonging gives a new dimension to human life by linking the brief life of the individual with the more permanent and influential life of his group.

The Jew, not being identified with any of the Gentile religious communities, feels himself an outsider, if not an outcast, unless he can join a Jewish community that is interested in his welfare and expects him to take an interest in its welfare.

An organic community is one in which the unity of the individual members has the quality of kinship that normally exists among the members of a family. In the ideal family, individual differences are recognized as legitimate and each member does his best to help every other achieve his personal aims, while all try to insure that the family shall continue as a cooperating unit.

Similarly, in larger groups, such as nations, peoples or churches, diversity need not lead to disunity. On the contrary, it is precisely the denial of the right to differ that leads to alienation, secession and schism. We cannot achieve Jewish unity by excommunicating whole sec-

tions of Jewry or, what amounts to the same thing, by refusing to associate with other Jewish groups than our own, on the ground that ours is the *she-erit yisrael*, the "surviving remnant" and sole legitimate representative of the true Jewish people.

30. Can the organic community projected by Reconstructionism have the same kind of authority and the same type of influence that characterized the medieval Jewish communities?

No. It is inevitable that the kind of authority and the type of influence maintained by a modern organic Jewish community must differ from those maintained by the *kehillot* (communities) of the pre-modern era. The fundamental motivation for Jewish community life today is radically different from what it was in those days. In the past, Jews were compelled to form *kehillot*, because they were treated as aliens and segregated by the governments of the countries in which they lived. They had no status as individuals, and, therefore, had to be organized in communities mainly for the purpose of levying the taxes which the State exacted from them as a group. In addition, they administered those activities which were necessary for social living, and which in our day are administered by governments: education, settlement of internal disputes, provisions for security, etc., as well as provision for re-

ligion. In our day, when Jews enjoy all the rights of citizenship, the only motivation for Jews' forming organic communities can be the desire to belong to a historic people that can help give meaning and purpose to their lives, individually and collectively.

Since the *k e h i l l o t* had to be quasi-states, their authority assumed something of the autocratic character of the governments of those days. Their influence derived from implicit acceptance of tradition and the application of sanctions or compulsive measures. The organic community for our day, however, would be a *v o l u n t a r y* association to carry out common purposes without any authority to impose penalties, except the denial of the benefits of membership to those who refuse to accept their responsibilities as members. Its influence would be based on the benefits its members derive from voluntary cooperation with their fellow-Jews for common ends.

31. Will not the establishment of organic Jewish community lead to bureaucracy and power politics?

That danger exists, and it must be faced frankly. It is a danger that is inherent in every effort of human beings to unite and to collaborate for common ends. All such efforts involve some exercise of authority to interpret and carry out the common purposes for which

the group unites. There is always a possibility and a temptation to abuse that power.

Despite that danger, however, mankind has not chosen the alternative of anarchy. If the concentration of power may lead to frustration through its abuse, the dissipation of power where individuals are left wholly to their own resources is bound to lead to frustration through impotence. The solution must always lie in a synthesis of freedom and cooperation. That synthesis can come about only through each individual's assumption of responsibility for choosing the right leaders. This is what we mean by democracy.

To carry out the purposes to which Jewish tradition commits us, the only way is through an organized cooperation which derives from a feeling of oneness with the Jewish people throughout its history and from a desire to unite with one's fellow Jews to insure a worthy future for the Jewish people. If we want that kind of cooperation, the sole instrument that can effect it is some form of organic community, organic in the sense that the parts serve the whole and the whole serves the parts.

In determining the structure and modus operandi of such a community, in laying down its constitution and by-laws and in participating in the choice of its leaders and giving them support, we must constantly bear in mind the inherent danger from "the never-ending audacity of elected persons." But we must not

refuse to choose leaders for fear that they might betray the confidence we put in them.

After all, the very justification for maintaining Jewish tradition, however we may interpret it, is that it is a source of values and ideals which help us in our human relations as well as in our relation to God. But that claim is meaningless, unless we give ourselves a chance to test those values in our relations with one another as Jews. If we want Judaism at all, we must want Jews, at whatever risk, to cooperate continually to the best of their endeavors in order to maintain and advance Judaism.

32. How does one answer the argument that Jew-hatred kept the Jews together and that, if they had been accorded decent treatment, they would have disappeared as Jews?

That statement is one of those half-truths which are all the more deceptive because of the element of truth in them. No effect in life is the result of a single cause, and every cause usually has more than one effect. When a Jew asserts his loyalty under the stress of anti-Semitism, it is only partly a consequence of the anti-Semitism. If he were not himself imbued with some appreciation and love of Judaism, anti-Semitism would undoubtedly have the effect of driving him away from Judaism.

On the other hand, if there were no anti-Semitism, and if Jews were not subjected to

defamation, what motive would any Jew have for severing his tie with the Jewish people and Judaism? If he finds either the one or the other below standard, what is there to prevent him from bringing them up to standard, especially in a democratic environment like that of this country of ours?

33. Why does all the world hate the Jews?

The question can be answered only in the light of the historical role played by the Jewish people. In pre-Christian times Jews were hated because of their unwillingness to share in the pagan feasts of their neighbors. That led to the accusation that Jews were unsocial. The early Christians were similarly hated in the pagan world, and for the same reason.

With the rise of Christianity as an independent religion, its adherents had to rationalize their Church's claim to being the true Israel, by making the Jewish people appear in the role of anti-Christ and deicide. When Christianity came into power as the established religion of the Roman empire, it sought to segregate the Jews by official edicts, in order to prevent conversion to Judaism, as well as to fix in the popular mind the idea that the Jews were rejected by God and were accursed.

For detailed evidence of the Christian Church's responsibility for Jew-hatred, the reader is referred to the work of a distinguished

Christian scholar, Malcolm Hay's "The Foot of Pride," published by Beacon Press, Boston.

As the culture of Europe throughout the Middle Ages was Christian, the hostile attitude of Christianity toward Judaism and the Jews was reflected in the literature and art of Christendom. The result was that, even after the Church had lost its power, and even in secularist circles, the stereotype of the Jew as the embodiment of social evil was perpetuated in Western culture, including the works of the great writers—Shakespeare's Shylock, Dickens' Fagin, for example.

We must not, however, assume that it is the inexorable fate of the Jews to suffer the hatred of the world for all time. Although anti-Semitism is more widespread than other forms of group antipathy, it is of a piece with them, and like them, a manifestation of the aggressive impulses that exist in most peoples and societies and that constitute the great menace to civilization and world peace. The Jews have been aptly designated as the "barometer of civilization," since the treatment accorded to them is the best index of the rise or decline of aggressiveness in the world.

We thus become instrumental in exposing the malady of aggressiveness, and, by bringing out the symptom, contribute to its diagnosis and eventual mitigation and cure. That may not be an agreeable role, but it puts us on our mettle. If, despite the malice directed

against us, we maintain our faith in the eventual achievement of a more humane mankind, our suffering is touched with dignity. We can then glory in the fact that our lot is with the victims, rather than with the perpetrators, of injustice—a teaching preached by Christianity but one that Christians have compelled the Jews to practice.

34. Is Jewish self-hatred confined to assimilationists and are so-called positive Jews free from it?

Certainly not. Modern psychology has taught us that a tendency to self-hatred is, in greater or lesser degree, present in all human beings. We all harbor aggressive tendencies. When these cannot be turned outward, they are often turned inward and result in self-hate. We then hate whatever we are and whatever we believe has made us what we are. That self-hate, in extreme cases, leads men to suicide.

Positive Jews are not wholly exempt from its operation. Even those who are among the first to condemn assimilation as a policy, sometimes register a hidden Jewish self-hate in giving their children non-Jewish names, in trying not to be seen in public with a Hebrew or Yiddish book, and in feeling flattered when they are told that they or their children do not look like Jews.

Nevertheless, we must recognize a distinction between self-hatred as it manifests itself in as-

similationists and in positive Jews. In the case of assimilationists, their self-hatred motivates their assimilationism. They do not want the Jewish people to exist, because its very existence is what makes them hateful to themselves.

In the case of the positive Jew who may manifest Jewish self-hate, their positive Jewish attitude does not result from their hatred of the Jewish people but from their love of it, and whatever Jewish self-hatred they may manifest is inconsistent with their positive Jewish position, and is not of a piece with it. If both positive and assimilationist Jews sometimes seem to be alike in showing a degree of hostility and rancor toward fellow-Jews who do not agree with them, it must be borne in mind that the assimilationist hates his fellow-Jew for being loyal to the Jewish people and to Judaism, whereas the positive Jew may hate some of his fellow-Jews for not being loyal enough, according to his understanding of Judaism and Jewry. His hatred of his fellow-Jews is thus not a manifestation of Jewish self-hatred but merely of narrowmindedness and fanaticism. It is as mischievous, but not as fatal to Judaism, as the self-hatred of the assimilationist.

35. What does a parent tell his child who has been called a "dirty Jew?"

Important as it is to know what to tell the child after he has encountered anti-Semitism

for the first time, it is even more important to know how to prepare him in advance for such encounters.

In the first place, he should be given, in early infancy, such happy and hallowed associations with Jewish life through attractive forms of Jewish observance, especially in association with Sabbaths and holidays, that any slur on Jews will be recognized as false and resented as such. Where parents deliberately, or through neglect, fail to let the child know that he is Jewish and to associate his Jewishness with the love and security of the home atmosphere, a sudden exposure to anti-Semitism in early life is likely to have serious psychological consequences. In that case, the parents themselves should have undergone a re-education as Jews.

A home which wisely endeavors from the outset to prepare the child for Jewish life teaches him to withstand the taunts of anti-Semites. It trains him to regard anti-Semitism not as reflecting any valid aspersions on Jews such as need make him ashamed, but as expressions of the general tendency of people to dislike those who belong to other groups than their own. He should be given examples of that tendency, and should be cautioned against manifesting it himself. He should be encouraged to defend himself against aggression. He should be taught to recognize that

aggressive tendencies exist also in himself and that he must, therefore, be careful not to nurse any deep-seated hatred even of children with whom he may find it necessary to fight.

PART THREE:

Jewish Religion

36. How shall we win for religion those Jews who resist it while they cling to other aspects of Jewishness?

This question evidently refers to those Jews who want the Jewish people to survive. In their number would be many secularist or cultural Zionists, Yiddishist humanists, and most members of Jewish fraternal orders.

What is it that keeps so many of these Jews aloof from, or even antagonistic to, Jewish religion? The answer is: the mistaken assumption that religion in general, and Jewish religion in particular, commits one to a static system of beliefs and practices inherited from the past. Never having been exposed to a dynamic conception of religion, they are not even aware that it is possible for religion to undergo a creative development.

A dynamic conception of religion is one which treats religion as the response to man's natural need for an interpretation of life that would render life worthwhile, despite the evils that mar it. When religion is so conceived, its function is to inspire men to be and to do their best in all the circumstances of life. Religion should help us overcome the temptations that prevent the individual from achieving effective and creative personality and that prevent mankind from achieving a unified and harmonious society. It should enable us to face

with serenity the worst misfortunes that can befall us. Such is the function of religion, and whatever in a people's civilization performs that function is part of its religion.

Obviously, as each age undergoes experiences which are new, the interpretation of life which will satisfy men's spiritual or religious needs must be subject to change. Each age demands its own mode of response to the circumstances that confront it. However, the responses of past ages to analogous situations, while they cannot be exactly reproduced in our day, do afford much inspiration and guidance. They need to be reckoned with, but only as a man reckons with memories from the past when he is confronted by a new situation. Our cultural and religious heritage should be looked upon as a treasury on which we can draw, but which needs to be constantly replenished, if it is not to be exhausted in time.

Jewish religion so conceived should commend itself to all who are concerned in any way with Jewish survival, once their mistaken conception of the static character of religion is corrected.

37. What in Judaism makes being a Jew worthwhile?

In asking what there is that makes it worthwhile to be a Jew, we must have in mind a specific situation: either that of a non-Jew who

wants to know whether he should become a Jew, or that of a Jew who wants to know why he should remain a Jew. Even these two questions need to be considered in more specific detail, before we can answer the question that has been posed.

Let us consider first the case of the non-Jew who asks the question. Let us assume he asks the question because he wants to marry a Jewess, since other motives for seeking conversion to Judaism are relatively rare. In that case there is already an element in the situation that favors his becoming a Jew, since that would provide a common spiritual basis for the home he intends to establish. The answer one would have to give him is, therefore, similar to the answer one would give a Jew and will be considered presently.

If a non-Jew, who does not contemplate marrying a Jewess, asks the question, it can only be because he either has rejected the religious tradition of his home environment, or because he is without any religious tradition and feels the need for one. The validity of Judaism for such a person must be made to rest upon those potential developments of it which have a basis in its past. What are those potentialities? That is for us Jews to answer by giving evidence of the ethical and spiritual creativity of Judaism.

When it is a Jew who asks the question, he wants to know what he can find in Judaism

of the past that can stimulate him to be ethically and spiritually creative as a Jew. The answer which he should receive is this: The distinctive element in the Jewish religious tradition is the doctrine of the unity of God, viewed in the light of what it has come to imply in terms of man's salvation or self-fulfilment.

The unity of God implies that we are to look to the self-integration of the individual and to the unity of mankind for the meaning and worthwhileness of human life. It also implies that the ultimate destiny of the human species is to achieve the art of so living together that the resulting society would deserve to be called God's kingdom of righteousness. With that as a guiding principle, a Jew should be able to find in his tradition enough to make him ethically and spiritually creative, and above all, happy in being a Jew.

38. If, as Reconstructionism states, religion is the core of Judaism, how can non-believers be part of the Jewish people?

A religion, properly understood, is that aspect of a civilization which enables those who live by it to make the most of their lives, or to achieve salvation. Religion is the core of Judaism, because Jewish civilization is essentially the kind of civilization which consciously and deliberately aims at enabling Jews to make the most of their lives, to achieve a character that makes for their own well-being and that

of mankind. All who are interested in Jewish civilization and want it to help them achieve a life that is worthwhile for themselves and for others have a share in Jewish religion. They may not think of themselves as religious. That is because they identify religion with some limited or mistaken conception of it. Yet, insofar as they do help the Jewish people make of its civilization a source of salvation for themselves, their fellow-Jews and mankind, they really practice Jewish religion, without calling it such.

39. Is it true that Reconstructionism stresses the sociological and psychological elements in religion and neglects the theological element?

It is most unfair to charge Reconstructionism with neglecting theology. A considerable part of its literature—books, pamphlets and articles—is devoted to a discussion of theological problems. My book, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, deals entirely with that subject. Eugene Kohn's *The Future of Judaism*, Milton Steinberg's *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem* and my other books on Judaism are in large part theological in character.

It is, however, undeniable that social and psychological factors figure very prominently in Reconstructionist thinking and writing. The

much greater prominence given to those aspects of Judaism in Reconstructionist thinking than is given in the traditional approach to Judaism has led people to the erroneous conclusion that theology is undervalued.

Such an inference is as unwarranted as it would be to infer that because the army teaches military techniques to its recruits, it does not deem patriotism and national loyalty to be important to the nation's security. While it is true that the belief in God may or may not result from attention to the psychological and social factors involved in religion, the knowledge of how best to serve God in our day does depend on an appreciation of those factors.

40.

In his novel "The Wall," John Hersey says: "The fact that a man is is more important than the fact that he believes what he believes. . . . Any man who cannot recognize this is an enemy of humanity." Is this view consistent with Reconstructionist thinking?

The statement in *The Wall* sounds plausible, but on closer examination proves not to be quite true.

The "agent of inhumanity," whom the character in *The Wall* says we are justified in killing, is such precisely because he "cannot recognize this." But why can he not recognize this? Because "he believes what he believes," namely, the whole perverse Nazi ideology.

Clearly the fact that a man "believes what he believes" is more important than "that he is," since it is used as justification for putting an end to his being.

The truth is that we are what we believe. >

We should be accepted for what we are unless our existence is a menace to others, i.e., unless we hold that others have no right to believe differently from the way we do. We are then the "agents of inhumanity." Despite, however, what the character in *The Wall* argues, even then we should only be restrained but not killed, unless we are so fanatic in our intolerance as actually to kill those who dissent.

41. Please explain the idea of a "personal God."

The possibility of believing in a personal God depends on what one means by the term "personal." Many people cannot believe in a God who is merely a magnified man, however subtle the substance of which such an anthropomorphic Being is said to consist. Not only cannot God be regarded as having corporeal attributes. He cannot even be viewed as thinking, feeling or willing in any manner comparable to the way man does. Such ideas of God have long been condemned as idolatrous, in accordance with the teachings of Maimonides and other Jewish theologians in the Middle Ages.

The real question is: "Does the belief that there is a God make any difference in your personal life?" A God who makes a difference in one's personal life should be designated as a personal God. If we believe in God as the totality of the influences in the universe which make for our becoming fully human, we must understand by personality that in us in which all those influences are brought to a focus.

Personality, understood in that sense, and not merely in the sense of the sum total of our mental life, is the manifestation or revelation of the divine. God is thus personal to us, the very ground of our personality. In this sense, it is possible to believe in a personal God.

42. Does the concept of revelation have a place in modern religious thinking?

There is a sense in which we can speak of divine revelation, but it involves a reinterpretation of the traditional terms, which helps us feel our continuity with the Jewish past, and hence our responsibility for the Jewish future. The ancients expressed themselves in terms of the world as they knew it. We must express ourselves in terms of the world as we know it, for only in that way can anything have meaning for us. The following will serve as an illustration:

When our forefathers declared an idea to be revealed, it was because they were con-

vinced, in the light of their faith in God and of their conception of Him, that that idea was somehow related to God's purpose in having created them, and to the fulfilment of their destiny as individuals, as Jews, and as human beings. We today, who look upon God as the Power that prods man to become fully human, must regard as revealed any idea that helps individuals and groups to achieve the full stature of their humanity. Man's discovery of religious truth is God's revelation of it, since the very process of that discovery implies the activity of God.

43. Can Jewish religion dispense with dogma?

Without going too deeply into the historic origin of dogma, a historic perspective is necessary to an understanding of the place of dogma in religion generally and in Jewish religion in particular. Such a glimpse into the history of religion would show the following to be true:

So long as religions were confined to the peoples among whom they arose and did not seek adherents among members of other peoples, there was no occasion for formulating religious beliefs of the people in any rigid creed of authoritative beliefs or dogmas.

As soon, however, as a people came to regard its religion as the only true religion, it was led to formulate those beliefs in terms which would convince others that the adop-

tion of its way of life would bring them salvation. Jewish religion reached that development during the era of the Second Commonwealth. It then formulated such dogmas as belief in the resurrection and in the world to come.

When the Christian, and later the Islamic, religion arose, each claiming to be the exclusive way of salvation for men, they, too, found it necessary to formulate dogmas; such as that of the divinity of Jesus and of the vicarious atonement, in the case of Christianity, and that of the divine revelation of the Koran and the consummation of prophecy in the teachings of Mohammed, in the case of Islam.

From the standpoint of those Jews who find a psychological need to accept traditional Jewish religion, with its belief in the hereafter, the resurrection and the coming of the Messiah, the same condition which led to the origin of dogma still obtains. For them, dogma is still indispensable to their religion.

There are many Jews, however, who, in the light of the intellectual development of the last two centuries, find the traditional dogmas unacceptable. They do not expect Jewish religion to afford them a key to other-worldly salvation. They do not assume that Jewish religion offers the o n l y way of salvation. They nevertheless, look to it to help them achieve the highest and holiest form of life attainable by them. It is obvious that no authoritarian dogma is possible for such Jews. Free-

dom of thought leads inevitably to diversity of thought and religious unity can therefore no longer be based on dogmatic formulation of belief. Instead, religious unity must be based on the common desire of people to have their civilization supply spiritual wants which they all share.

44. Since mutual tolerance is practiced by religions, why is it necessary to recognize the equality of all religions?

In the first place, it must be stated that the religions have not, as a matter of fact—except for a few “heretical” denominations—incorporated tolerance into their religious thinking. Such tolerance as exists has been imposed by the State, because of the impasse resulting from the co-existence of mutually intolerant religions. Where State constitutions do not enforce tolerance, it does not exist.

Mere tolerance is not enough, because it is compatible with the assumption that one’s own religion has an exclusive monopoly of the means to salvation or, at any rate, a privileged accessibility to those means. A man may have very definite convictions, but that does not justify him in assuming that his convictions are necessarily right and those of his neighbor necessarily wrong. Any such assumption on the part of an individual Reconstructionism views as morally wrong. It is no less wrong on the part of such social entities as nations,

races or religions. To be merely tolerant is to lack the humility which recognizes a universal fallibility, and which concedes that groups as well as individuals have equal rights to their own opinions and way of life, provided they respect the similar rights of others.

45. Why can not the Chosen People idea be interpreted to mean that Jews were the first to proclaim a spiritual or ethical pattern of life?

The term "chosen" applied to a group denotes that the group has had a special and privileged status conferred on it. Thus, "chosen" belongs to a universe of thought in which privilege is bestowed and does not have to be earned.

If priority is affirmed not merely as a fact but as a basis for higher status, it is just as objectionable on ethical grounds as is the privilege associated with primogeniture. Nothing is therefore gained by basing our claim to be a chosen people on our having been the first to proclaim a high standard of ethical life.

Moreover, it is neither spiritual nor ethical to boast or thank God for whatever privileges one enjoys. It is like the attitude satirized in the nursery rhyme of Little Jack Horner, who, when served his portion of pie,

"Stuck in his thumb
And pulled out a plum
And said, "What a great boy am I!"

46.

Do not Jews need the "Chosen People" idea to compensate for the feeling of inferiority resulting from the Christian teaching that God has rejected the Jewish people?

If we understand the background of the doctrine of the Church that God has rejected the Jewish people, we will find that the Chosen People idea is not needed to protect Jews from the psychological consequences of the Church's doctrine.

That doctrine belongs to a thought-world which is alien to the one we live in today. In that thought-world, it was taken for granted that man's self-fulfilment could not be achieved on this earth but only in a life after death. It was also assumed that the key to salvation could not be discovered by man through his own powers, but that it had been revealed by God to His Chosen People. That belief was common to both Christians and Jews. But since Christianity made faith in the efficacy of the vicarious atonement through Jesus on the cross the key to salvation, and since Judaism denied the divinity of Jesus and hence the entire Christian doctrine of salvation, the Church was constrained to teach that God had rejected the Jews for rejecting Jesus as savior, and that thenceforth the Church was God's Chosen People.

As long as the entire Western World believed in some supernatural revelation as the

key to otherworldly salvation, the belief that the Jews were still the Chosen People was the only alternative that Jews could oppose to the conception that the Jewish people had been rejected in favor of the Church. Belief in the chosenness of the Jewish people was, therefore, in pre-modern times, a necessary and legitimate response to the Christian doctrine of God's rejection of the Jews.

In our modern environment, however, most men seek self-fulfilment in this world by natural means. Since these natural means are equally available to all peoples, salvation cannot be a monopoly of any single "chosen" people, neither of the Jewish people nor of the Church. Different religions are merely so many different ways in which certain historic groups seek to bring life into harmony with the will of God as that will can be discerned in natural law and human society.

For Jews to accept belief in the chosenness of the Jewish people as an alternative to belief in God's rejection of the Jewish people would be to substitute one error for another, one illusion for another. It is dangerous to avoid the pain of disillusionment by hugging an illusion; we can only find true salvation by the acceptance of reality.

That does not mean that Jews need reject the inspiration of faith in a high destiny for the Jewish people. That faith should henceforth take the form of belief in the vocation of the

Jewish people instead of its chosenness. By v o c a t i o n we mean the dedication of a people to the task of giving to the world those universal values which its experiences have revealed to it. Consecration of the Jewish people to its vocation makes it a "holy people," but nothing in such a vocation implies that other peoples cannot become just as holy, if they, too, dedicate themselves to serving God by embodying in human life the universal values that t h e i r historic experiences have revealed to t h e m .

47. Should Jews engage in missionary activities for Jewish religion?

We are hardly in a position now to engage in effective proselytizing activity. Those values which Judaism has for the Jews have not been sufficiently articulated in our day to enable us to present them convincingly to others. That is due to the fact that the traditional values must first be translated into terms which belong to the language of contemporary thought. Even that is not enough to qualify us as missionaries, for those values must not only be articulated; they must be accepted and made part of the spiritual capital of the average Jew and not only of Jews who have a professional interest in Judaism.

When that has come about, we may look forward to the following twofold result:

1—The universal aspects of Jewish thought and life will be taken over by the rest of the world, for all universal values in art, music, literature, social and economic institutions are likely, through the cross-fertilization of cultures, to gain general acceptance. Thus French abstract painting, American jazz, Arabic rhymed verse, Anglo-Saxon parliamentarism, etc., though having their origin in particular cultures, have become the common heritage of mankind. No special missionary effort is needed to produce that result.

2—The increased enthusiasm of Jews for their own way of life will induce a desire to have non-Jews share in it. That would naturally lead to active missionary effort to augment the ranks of the Jewish people.

48. If ritual changes are made now, how can one prevent future changes that may destroy the whole traditional background of Jewish religion?

If the changes proposed for Jewish ritual are intended to give it vitality and freshness, there is no need to fear that such changes will ever lead to a radical break with tradition. Reconstructionism does not wish to give a *coup de grace* to important rites which, in our day, tend to be neglected. On the contrary, it wishes so to modify them that they would be likely to be revived. To reconstruct means to re-affirm, re-achieve, re-establish.

One or two illustrations may serve to make this clear. It has been proposed, for example, that Jews permit themselves to ride to the synagogue to attend services on Sabbaths and holidays. Rigid conformity with the traditional rule against riding would keep many of them from attending public worship on those days. Only by relaxing the rule prohibiting riding is it possible to reinstate public worship on the Sabbath and holidays as a hallowing influence on Jewish life.

Or take the proposal to call up women to the reading of the Torah. That is an innovation, and hence a departure from traditional practice. It is justified, however, because it adds to the significance of the Torah reading. As long as women had no share in public life, it was no derogation of the importance of that rite to limit its performance to men. But in our day, to exclude half of the congregation from participating in this ritual observance because of their sex definitely detracts from its importance. Here, too, the departure from traditional usage tends to strengthen rather than weaken a traditional value, that of reverence for the Torah.

Thus, this rule can be set down by which the danger expressed in the question may be avoided: only such ritual changes as tend to reinforce the cardinal principles of our religion should be made.

49. Is there a place in modern life for the idea of holiness?

For the most part, modern thought regards as all-inclusive the classification of life's ideal as the true, the good and the beautiful. The reason for excluding the ideal of holiness is its association with sanctimoniousness and superstition.

However, the connection between holiness and the idea of God is so strong that we cannot separate one from the other. Both have had a similar history of ill-conceived and superstitious interpretation. Originally, the "holy" was but another name for that which was tabu or forbidden on the authority of some god and with the support of some divine sanction. Our conception of God has been affected by philosophic thinking and has been purged of its superstitious elements. But it has not been discarded. When rid of its association with superstition, the belief in God is as indispensable to our thinking as the belief in one's own personality. Similarly, the idea of holiness, when purged of its superstitious associations remains valid and necessary.

Holiness, in this sense, is the quality anything in life possesses, insofar as it serves to inspire or guide man in his effort to achieve his destiny.

50. How can Jewish worship be revitalized?

Reconstructionists do not pretend to possess the solution to this problem. There cannot be any one solution to it, since the question of revitalizing worship is bound up with the whole question of revitalizing Jewish religion, and that in turn is bound up with the question of revitalizing Jewish life in general.

Reconstructionism does have an approach to the problem which, if pursued with patience and perseverance, may, in the course of time, effect good results.

The Reconstructionist devotional literature is a modest beginning in the right direction. The New Haggadah, the Sabbath Prayer Book, and the High Holiday Prayer Book, are not meant to be the last word in liturgic literature. Their chief merit lies in their attempt to express, as far as possible, those spiritual needs which have arisen from the circumstances of contemporary life. A tremendous amount of work has still to be done to discover what are the real spiritual needs to which Jewish worship and ritual should minister. That calls for reevaluating our liturgy to make it relevant to those needs and for replenishing it with new prayers arising out of the experiences of our age and interpreting them in a religious spirit. There is an urgent need for rabbis and laymen to pursue earnest studies and to stimulate creative activity in this field. The problem is difficult

and complex and much effort and time will have to be expended on it.

Any suggestions made for revitalizing public worship must necessarily be tentative. One cannot tell in advance just how people will react to any proposed change. Nor is their first unreflective reaction necessarily a test of its value. Our empty pews are, however, *p r i m a f a c i e* evidence that nothing which has so far been done to improve our liturgy has succeeded in making attendance at worship a felt want of American Jews.

The following *t e n t a t i v e* suggestions are submitted for consideration and discussion.

We should reopen the whole question of how to make worship yield a sense of actual communion with God and enable us to experience, to the fullest degree, the divine element in every situation that confronts us. To be Jewish, worship must give us a sense of oneness with our people past and present, but that is not enough; it is not true worship unless it also gives us an experience of the Divine that is immediate and personal. In order to do that adequately, worship must reckon with the many changes that have taken place and have affected our thinking and feeling about life.

51. Does not the use of the organ in Jewish religious services create an untraditional church-like atmosphere?

To those who are not accustomed to the use of the organ it undoubtedly conveys associa-

tions with Christian worship. Any foreign custom when first adopted appears strange. Gradually, however, it acquires Jewish association so that its retention is sometimes insisted upon on religious grounds when, at a later time, some would discard it. The original source of the custom is often forgotten. Thus the wearing of the fur *streimel*, originally adopted by Jews when it was the headgear of the Polish nobility, subsequently acquired such Jewish associations for the Hasidim that many of them insist on wearing it to this day in the warm climate of Israel.

If the use of the organ can add to the solemnity and expressiveness of the Jewish service, the mere fact that, at present, it sounds foreign to those who are unaccustomed to it should not stand in the way of its adoption. That it can contribute to this result may be stated on the authority of so eminent a Jewish musicologist as the late A. Z. Idelsohn, who, when asked his opinion on the introduction of the organ, replied, "If we want creativity in liturgical music, the organ is essential."

Legalists will raise the objection that it is prohibited to adopt any *hukkat ha goy*, any Gentile custom: Our norm, however, should be that suggested in a Talmudic passage according to which the Prophet Ezekiel is represented as rebuking his people both for having followed the *objectionable* customs

of the non-Jews among whom they lived and for not having adopted their g o o d customs.

52.

Since Reconstructionism sanctions diversity of religious opinion, why should it not be possible for a Jew to profess Christianity and still remain a Jew?

To answer this question it is necessary to understand the nature of both Judaism and Christianity, wherein they differ, and how that difference necessarily affects their mutual relations.

Both Christianity and Judaism are dynamic religious civilizations. That this is true of Catholicism is clear from the way the Latin language, Catholic art, culture, literature and social organization permeate the whole life of the devout Catholic community. It is less obviously true of the Protestant churches. But whatever cultural heritage Christians possess in common is still part of a Western Civilization which was once wholly dominated in spirit by the Christian Church. The Church is the People of Christianity as truly as World Jewry is the People of Judaism.

There is this difference, however, between the Jewish religious civilization and the Christian: the Jewish religious civilization is a f o l k or e t h n i c civilization in that it is the civilization of a p a r t i c u l a r p e o p l e and is content to remain such, whereas Christianity, which came into maturity as the religion not of a particular folk or people but of an empire,

aspires to become the universal civilization of the world.

To be sure, Jewish religion is also a universal religion in the sense that it is eager to have all men accept those universal human values which it seeks to foster among its own people, but it does not demand that all men become Jews in order to do so. Judaism has also accepted from other civilizations what it has found good in them without ceasing to be Jewish. Christianity, however, owing its very existence to a missionary effort to win converts to the Church, seeks to displace or subordinate all other civilizations, Judaism included.

But in its relation to Judaism, Christianity is even more explicit in denying Judaism's right to permanent existence. The fact that Jesus was a Jew and that, nevertheless, the Jewish people does not accept faith in his divinity as a condition of salvation, has led the Church to denounce Judaism in order to justify its own claim to be the one true vehicle for God's self-revelation to man. In the sacred literature of the Church, the Jewish people is portrayed as "Anti-Christ" and as the "Synagogue of Satan" and is held to be doomed to perdition, unless it repent and submit to the authority of the Church.

That is why no Jew can be converted to Christianity without first renouncing his ties with Judaism and the Jewish people.

53.

If we deny the divine authority of the Bible and the texts developed from it, how are we to know what is good and what is evil, and what is to be the basis of our ethical code?

Reconstructionism regards the Bible as a collection of divinely inspired human writings. That is not in accord with the traditionalist view which regards the Bible as the revealed word of God free of all human error.

The Biblical writings vary in the degree of inspiration to be ascribed to them. Those parts, like the Pentateuch, which have fashioned Jewish consciousness most profoundly should be considered the most divinely inspired, insofar as that consciousness reflects what we may regard as the will of God. Their being so divinely inspired implies that their *g e n e r a l p u r p o s e* must be accepted by us as authoritative. That general purpose is to help us become fully human, or, as the Torah puts it, "in the image of God." Hence the general principles distinguishing between good and evil, which are set forth in the Torah and are accepted by all men of good will, receive from it their divine sanction.

On the other hand, the details as to how the good is to be achieved and the evil avoided are subject to the changing conditions of human life. Thus polygamy and slavery, though permitted by the Torah, are today prohibited because human experience has shown them to

conflict with the dignity of the human person.

There is evidence in the Torah itself that man is assumed to be able to distinguish between right and wrong without having received such knowledge from the Torah. For example, God punishes the generation of the Flood and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, though they had not received the Law. The Talmud says that there are certain moral traits we could have learned from animal life, even if the Torah had not taught us the need of cultivating them.

54. How does Reconstructionism reckon with the general tendency of Jewish workers to keep aloof from the synagogue and institutional religion?

Reconstructionism tries to reckon with the problem realistically. Labor does not keep aloof from the synagogue primarily on ideological grounds. Under existing conditions, the synagogue depends for its maintenance on those who can afford to provide the necessary financial resources. The average worker is in no position to contribute to those resources in adequate measure. Not being a member of a congregation, he is deprived of the services of the rabbi, the teacher and other members of the congregation's staff, whose function it is to foster the religious expression of Jewish life. Lacking such guidance, he soon loses touch with institutional religion. It is natural for him then to seek and to find a rationale to justify his apathy or antagonism.

That condition will prevail as long as religious services are rendered only to those who can afford to join a congregation. Thus, congregations inevitably will remain middle class institutions. Some congregational organizations and rabbinic bodies have occasionally tried to grapple with the problem. They have endeavored to make membership accessible to workers of limited means. Their offer, however, has never been taken up. The reason is not far to seek. Members of congregations, like those of social clubs, tend to associate with people of the same social and economic status as their own. Consequently, Jews of a different social and economic status do not feel at home in the society of those who are the principal financial supporters of the synagogue.

Not only does this condition have an injurious effect on the religion of the workers whom it keeps away from the synagogue; it has a bad effect also on the membership of the congregation itself. Being confined to middle-class people, the synagogue runs the danger of identifying religion with the interests of the middle-class, of covering with a cloak of respectability the social and economic transgressions of its members, of providing them with an anodyne against the pangs of conscience, instead of sensitizing their consciences. If these Jews could meet in the synagogue on an equal plane with Jews of the underprivileged group, who

suffer from social injustice, it would deflate the pride of possession and help foster better social and ethical attitudes.

The only alternative to the present situation is the organic Jewish community advocated by Reconstructionism. In such a community, the fostering of Jewish religion would not be left to the private initiative of socially congenial and economically homogenous groups organized as congregations; it would be the responsibility of the entire community. Just as in certain Christian denominations, affiliation is with the parish rather than with a congregation, so in Judaism affiliation should be with the local community. Membership in the community should entitle every Jew to the religious services he needs. The Jewish community would be responsible for making facilities for worship and education available to all Jews who desire them on the same principle that the civic community assumes responsibility for public education and public health.

55. Why is it that so many intellectuals, who have lost all interest in religion, speak disparagingly of attempts to revise or reinterpret traditional religion, and express a preference for the "good old religion" they have long abandoned?

Such intellectuals, at some time in their lives, discover that the religion of their fathers does not fit into their own working philosophy

of life. For a long time after that discovery they manage to get along without paying any attention to religion. Then something happens to compel them to take notice of some new formulation or reinterpretation of the religion they have abandoned. The public discussion of the subject, for example, may lead to their being asked to express their opinion about it.

Under those circumstances, it is quite natural for them to speak disparagingly of efforts to reinterpret the beliefs and revise the practices of the religion to which they at one time adhered or into which they were born. To acknowledge the very possibility of preserving a religion by changing it would put them to no little embarrassment, for they would then have to account for their utter neglect of the entire problem. Why, if religion is susceptible to reinterpretation, revision and improvement, did they themselves not apply to the advancement of religion the same intellectual powers that they had brought to bear on other aspects of human life?

Being unable to answer that question candidly, without admitting that they have been wrong, they unburden themselves of a sense of guilt by rationalizing their intellectual inertia in regard to religion. They do this by maintaining that the only a u t h e n t i c religion is one that claims to be supernaturally revealed and immutable, and that all attempts to harmonize tradition with modern thought are

E r s a t z religion. Since, as modern intellectuals, they cannot be expected to accept traditional religion because of its supernaturalism, nor any revised version of religion because of its inauthenticity, they have a perfect "out" for their lack of concern with religion altogether.

All this is true of those intellectuals who retain the courage of their early prejudices against religion. Many there are, however, who cannot endure the meaningless and directionless existence which their minds have eked out for them. They are literally frightened out of their wits, when they find themselves lost and astray in a wilderness of doubt. In their panic, they turn to any cause that promises to organize their lives for them and that speaks with a voice of absolute authority.

Many of these lost souls at first yield to the allure of communism. But as soon as they realize the price in self-respect and human dignity they have to pay for being made free from all doubt, they flee from communism into the arms of some traditional religion. There they at last find the peace "that passeth understanding," without having to pay the price of inner deterioration. To render a traditional religion compatible with reason and human experience is, as far as they are concerned, to commit an act of vandalism, to undermine their last citadel of faith, the last refuge from gnawing doubt. They want nothing so much as "the good old religion."

56.

Should a group of Jews who are interested in Reconstructionism and who are not satisfied with any of the existing forms of worship constitute themselves a Reconstructionist congregation?

By all means, a congregation dedicated to Reconstructionist principles and reflecting them in its form of worship should be organized. But it should not be isolated from other congregations that may not be Reconstructionist, for that would defeat the Reconstructionist purpose of seeking to influence Jewish life as a whole.

The first group of Jews that was in a similar position organized as "The Society for the Advancement of Judaism" in New York (frequently designated by its initials, S. A. J.). The S. A. J. adopted as its platform the purposes which were later used to define the aim of *The Reconstructionist Magazine*: "The advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, the upbuilding of Eretz Yisrael, and the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace." But in keeping with its understanding of the spirit of Reconstructionism, the S. A. J. has, from its inception, been affiliated with a congregational union. The union with which it is affiliated happens to be the United Synagogue of America, but it would have been equally consistent with Reconstructionist principle if it had affiliated with any other con-

gregational union that permitted it to function as a Reconstructionist congregation and develop its own form of religious service.

To further Reconstructionist aims, the group should also decide to join one of the congregational unions, whichever seems to it to afford the best opportunity for influencing the course of American Jewish life as a whole. Reconstructionism does not want to develop into another religious denomination like Orthodoxy, Conservatism or Reform, because only by working within the framework of the existing religious institutions can it influence them to transcend their denominationalism and cooperate with one another and with the secularist elements in Jewry for the advancement of Judaism as the religious civilization of the Jewish people. It does not intend to add another set of competing institutions to the already chaotic condition of Jewish life in this country, but rather to unite American Jewry while retaining and exercising the right to one's own conception of what is required to preserve and enhance Judaism. Only in this way can the Reconstructionist ideal of unity in diversity and diversity in unity be furthered.

57. What should be the attitude of the synagogue to the psychiatric approach to mental ills?

The therapeutic value of psychiatry for mental illness and even for some forms of physical illness has been established, and the syn-

agogue should recognize the fact. As a religious institution, the synagogue is naturally interested in the physical and mental health of the individual. With his physical health, it has little occasion to concern itself, since most people know when they are physically ill and resort to a physician for a cure. People suffering from mental ailments, however, are not always aware of the fact. They merely know that they are in trouble. Frequently they take their troubles to the rabbi. Since religion should help people to live, they should be encouraged to consult the rabbi, or some other qualified person on the staff of the congregation, about their personal problems. Some of the cases may require psychiatric treatment. The consultant, whether rabbi or layman, should be trained to identify such cases and recommend them to those authorized to practice psychiatry.

Such a liaison with the practitioners of the rapidly developing science of psychiatry will have a wholesome effect in averting the tendency of the rabbinic and the medical professions to regard each other as competitors in the field of mental healing. This will be advantageous to both. If the religious consultant will treat the mental physician and his science with respect, the mental physician will be more likely to appreciate the role of religion in maintaining the mental equilibrium of its adherents.

PART FOUR:

Way of Life

58. What are the main requirements for a Hebrew school that would meet the needs of our children?

The following three requirements are essential, if a Hebrew school is to meet the needs of the Jewish child:

(1) The school should know how to interest parents in creating the type of home that recognizes the indispensability of a Jewish education to the growth and welfare of the child.

(2) Its teachers should be imbued with an enthusiastic devotion to Judaism. No technique can take the place of the direct influence of the teacher's personality on the child.

(3) It should have a curriculum rich enough to require the attendance of the child for at least six to seven hours a week. The curriculum should consist of studies and activities which aim to give the child a feeling of personal attachment to the Jewish people and love for its spiritual heritage. Such a curriculum is inconceivable without emphasis on the Hebrew language and on religious ritual. This insistence on both language and ritual does not imply that they are the sole means of imparting a Jewish education.

59. Is it possible to transmit the Jewish literary heritage through the medium of translation?

There never was a time when all Jews in the Diaspora could read Hebrew literature with understanding, and it is asking too much of American Jewry to expect that such a condition should obtain here. While a translation may not give an accurate reproduction of the thought and feeling of any original text, nevertheless, history has shown that a great deal of the original spirit can be conveyed by translation. Otherwise, Judaism would long have perished in the Diaspora.

Jews, however, cannot depend wholly on translation to convey the message of the original text. There must, in every generation, be a considerable number of Jews sufficiently familiar with the original sources to be able to do the translating, to correct mistranslations and the errors resulting from them, and to serve as the teachers of the tradition. Teachers must be equipped with a thorough knowledge, so that they, at least, need not be barred from a direct approach to the sources of Jewish inspiration.

To depend entirely, however, on the English language in Jewish education would be a mistake. The Hebrew language is the most effective means of conveying the reality of the Jewish people to the consciousness of the Jewish child. It is an indispensable bond of

spiritual unity linking all the Jewries of the Diaspora with the cultural center of Jewry in Israel. Whether all Jews master the Hebrew language or not, the mere fact of its frequent use in school, synagogue and home fosters the sense of belonging to the Jewish people and to its Hebraic civilization.

Our general attitude, therefore, should be that a maximum of Hebrew knowledge is desirable and a minimum indispensable. If that principle is borne in mind, Jews can also use translations to advantage in perpetuating Judaism.

60. What is the Reconstructionist attitude to the "parochial" school?

In dealing with the problem of the so-called parochial school, it is necessary to eliminate the question of whether it is un-American. Our Government has never insisted on possessing a monopoly of the right to educate the child. As long as the education includes whatever subjects are necessary to an understanding of American ideals and institutions, it may be given under private as well as public auspices whether religious or secular.

In the interest of the Jewish child, however, as well as in that of the public good, it is desirable that, in some part of his schooling, he be brought into contact with children of different races and religions from his own. Such

mingling is as much a part of a child's education as are his studies.

That does not detract from the importance of having the first years of a child's schooling spent in a completely Jewish environment. This will give the child a sense of security by not exposing him prematurely to the shock of encounters with manifestations of anti-Semitism, or require him to adjust himself too early to a world very different from his home environment. If a child has received such a training in his elementary education, it would be very important for him on graduation to attend a public high school.

The feasibility, however, of a parochial system of Jewish education depends on the interest of parents in giving their children an integrated education, which is both Jewish and general, and on the ability of the Jewish community to help support such a system.

61. Since the public schools are concerned with the character training of the child, what is the responsibility of the Jewish school in this respect?

It is questionable to what extent the public schools are vitally concerned with the character training of the child. With the inadequate budgetary allowances for education, with overcrowded classes and harried teachers, and with the political interference of all sorts of pressure groups, it is very difficult indeed for the public

schools to make a good job of character training. Neither the curriculum, nor the administrative methods, nor the qualifications for teaching are such as to put the emphasis in our public schools on education for the art of living. The emphasis is rather on preparation for earning a livelihood.

But even if most of the obstacles referred to were removed, it would be impossible for the public schools to give children a complete ethical education. Their character training would still require supplementation by the religious school. Ethical behavior is not a matter of abstract principles merely; it calls for right relations in the specific situation in which the individual finds himself. Thus Jews have certain obligations and duties as Jews which they would not have if they were not Jews. The like is, of course, true of Christians.

On Jews rests the obligation to put to the best possible use the spiritual and cultural heritage accumulated by the Jewish people in the course of its long and checkered history. Cooperation with fellow Jews in making the most of Jewish life is a requirement of Jewish loyalty, an ethical requirement. But it is obviously not the function of the public school, which is supported by the taxes of all citizens, to inculcate that loyalty in the Jewish child.

The entire significance of the separation of church and state lies in the recognition of this

principle. The public schools could, if adequately supported by the public and adequately staffed, inculcate loyalty to the nation and to the democracy for which it stands. That would be and should be a function of any good public school system and its contribution to the ethical training of all American children. But that still leaves an area of ethical education for the religious school into which the public school cannot enter.

62.

Since Jewish tradition has the ritual of Bar Mitzvah for boys and many congregations have introduced the Bat Mitzvah for girls, is there need for the ceremony of Confirmation?

The Confirmation ceremony is a valuable contribution of the Reform movement to Jewish religious life. Its origin goes back to the early beginnings of that movement in Germany, but, like all the innovations introduced by Reform, this institution has had its main development in this country. There can be no doubt that Christian influence had much to do with its introduction. That, however, does not affect its legitimacy. Our ancient sages encouraged the adoption of Gentile practices that had intrinsic value as emphatically as they discouraged the adoption of those that were harmful.

The rite of Confirmation has properly been adopted by many Conservative congregations,

because it has helped to motivate the Jewish education of the young beyond the years of Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah. It has extended by two or more years the schooling of a great number of our Jewish school children. In our day, when Jewish education is entirely voluntary, we should set up every possible incentive to prolong the exposure of our children to its influence. It would, in fact, be well to motivate post-Confirmation studies by setting up, as has been suggested, a religious celebration upon entering maturity, one that would remind us of the need of renewing the covenant that has kept us a people.

With the influx into the Reform congregations of many Jews with a traditional background, there has been a demand for reintroducing the Bar Mitzvah ceremony and instituting the Bat Mitzvah. This has confronted some of the rabbis of those congregations with an embarrassing dilemma. They would like to satisfy the demand of their members in this respect. At the same time, they fear that it may give parents an excuse for terminating the education of their children at the age of 13, which would deprive those children of Jewish training during the crucial years of adolescence.

For rabbis in that position, it has been suggested that the instruction in preparation for Bar Mitzvah and the details of its cele-

bration should all stress the thought that B a r M i t z v a h should mean, not that the child has completed his Jewish education, but that he has qualified for admission to a new stage in Jewish education, one in which he assumes new responsibilities in the study and practice of Judaism in accordance with his maturing powers.

B a r M i t z v a h could thus be made a ceremony of initiation into a pre-Confirmation course of two or three years duration, and the privilege of being B a r M i t z v a h might be confined to those pledged to complete the course.

63. How can Jewish education promote a Jewish folk spirit?

By being treated as a life-long process to be carried on by a network of educational agencies.

We must give up the vain notion that Jewish education can all be crammed into a few years before B a r M i t z v a h or Confirmation, and the equally vain notion that it can be limited in space to a school or synagogue building. Jewish education must be viewed as a community problem, the expression of the community's will to live and to make Jewish life worth living.

To this end, it is necessary to pick out promising young people, who are idealistic and

eager to be of service, and give them an intensive training for Jewish communal life. Young people contemplating marriage should be encouraged to take courses qualifying them to establish Jewish homes. Young parents should be brought together with teachers to study the best ways of rearing their children as Jews. Bureaus of education should be enabled to develop a complete system of schools from kindergarten to college level. The programs of rabbinical seminaries should be enlarged till they become true universities of Judaism, offering a diversified education in preparation not only for the rabbinate but for Jewish social work, center work, education and every other form of professional service to the Jewish community. The synagogue should become again a *bet hamidrash* (house of learning) as well as a *bet hatefillah* (house of prayer). Adult Jewish education should be fostered by study circles in congregations, community centers, Zionist districts, etc. Jewish reading habits should be developed through publishing houses, libraries, and a Jewish periodical press. The arts should be developed as media of Jewish expression; motion pictures, radio and television should be used for Jewish educational purposes. And this list by no means exhausts the possible educational means by which folk spirit can be revived.

64. Should the New Testament be included in a curriculum of Jewish education?

The purpose of Jewish education in the Western world must be to enable Jews to live as Jews in Western civilization. That civilization is predominantly Christian and, to that extent, a challenge to Judaism. To meet that challenge, Jews must have an adequate knowledge of what it is all about. A knowledge of the New Testament is thus indispensable to a complete Jewish education. Without it, the Jew cannot feel confident of the rightness of his cause.

To be sure, if the knowledge of the New Testament is to give that confidence, it must be taught from a point of view that does not regard it as a new revelation of religious truth to the Jewish people, though it may have been such to the pagan world. The term, *N e w T e s t a m e n t*, by which the exclusively Christian Scriptures are known, is, therefore, from the Jewish standpoint a misnomer.

Apart from all other reasons for teaching the New Testament in Jewish schools, such instruction has the additional value of throwing light on a period of our history in which Judaism exerted a crucial influence on the religion of the world. It should, therefore, if taught in the proper spirit, confirm the Jewish student's faith in the universal significance of his own religious tradition.

65.

The Catholics say that, if they are given a child to educate for the first seven years, they can be confident that he will grow up a Catholic; why then do so many Jews who have had an intensive Jewish training in childhood break away in adult life from Jewish religion, even if not altogether from Jewish life?

The reason is to be found in a fundamental difference between Catholicism and Judaism. The basic element in Catholic training is the inculcation of loyalty to the Church and unquestioning obedience to its authorities. That habit, once inculcated, can be strong enough to carry over into years of maturity, because the Church and the hierarchy are living realities. Even so, the claim of the Church is somewhat exaggerated, as there are instances of defection from its ranks.

But in Judaism, there is no place for cultivating the habit of obedience to a functioning hierarchy. As long as the child remains a child, he relies on the authority of his parents, but when, as he matures, that authority is removed and his Jewish loyalty must depend only on his conviction of the worth of Judaism, he finds himself without any training to readjust his thinking to the larger vistas of experience into which he has been ushered.

This situation is aggravated for children who have had an Orthodox upbringing because of Orthodoxy's insistence on the unchangeability of a tradition as the criterion of its authenticity.

With the establishment of the Jewish state many Jews in Israel have adopted new Hebraic names; is there a significance to that change of names and should Jews in the Diaspora also adopt Hebraic names?

Every name is a proper noun of some particular language and hence a mark of identification with a particular civilization. From the time that Jews came in contact with other civilizations, they tended to accept names belonging to the language of the countries in which they lived.

It is significant of the varying relations of Jews to the host-civilization that at times they were compelled and at time forbidden to take surnames that were native to its language.

When Israel declared its independence, Jewish leaders in Israel wished to register the fact that they had severed their connections with the civilizations of the Diaspora and proposed to reinstate the Hebrew civilization as the predominant one in the land. That impelled them naturally to adopt Hebrew names. In a Hebrew-speaking country any other names are "outlandish." That is why Eliahu Epstein changed his name to Eliyahu Elat, Meir Berlin to Meir Bar-Ilan, Aubrey Eban to Abba Eban, Torczyner to Tur-Sinai, etc.

In the Diaspora, however, Jews must identify themselves by name with the civilization that supplies the major part of their physical

and cultural needs. If, however, they wish to remain Jews also, they cannot afford to be without names that identify them with the Jewish people. A Jew who deliberately rejects a name that might mark him as a Jew is giving way to an impulse to escape from Judaism. The best solution would be for the surname to be American and the personal name Jewish.

The Midrash records as one of the merits that made possible the redemption of our fathers from Egypt the fact that, even in their sojourn among the Egyptians, they did not surrender their identity by changing their names, Reuben to Rufus, Judah to Julian (as they probably did when the Midrash was written).

A suggestion that would add to our fund of Jewish values would be the formal adoption with proper ceremony of a Hebrew middle name on reaching maturity.

67. What do you mean by the term "Jewish art"?

A people's art is characteristic by virtue of its form and its content. A highly developed group art is one that has rich content as well as characteristic form. One can recognize the art of the Italian Renaissance by certain characteristics of line, color and chiaroscuro, but these do not account for the impression made by the work of a Michelangelo or a Raphael. It is the use of those forms to express the deeper spiri-

tual enthusiasms of the painters that makes of their work great art.

As far as Jewish art is concerned, the dispersion of Jews throughout the world and the lack of a homeland have prevented them from achieving a distinct art form. Perhaps the only exception is the cantillation of the scriptural readings which they took with them in their wanderings and which musicologists recognize as being of great antiquity.

But, though there is no Jewish art from the standpoint of form, from that of content one may regard as Jewish art any creative expression, in any medium, of emotional experiences that grow out of Jewish life. Since it is the function of art to give significant and abiding expression to human experiences, whatever does that for Jewish experience may be considered Jewish art, whether the work be that of a Jew or a non-Jew.

It is hoped that, with the establishment of the State of Israel and the spiritual unity of world Jewry, which we expect will evolve from life in Israel, a Jewish art will eventually arise that is distinctive both in form and content.

68. Since, in the past, the arts played a very subordinate role in Jewish civilization, why should they now be given so much emphasis?

The new emphasis on art is the result of the revolutionary change in Jewish religion. In

the past, Jewish religion was the strongest tie of Jewish spiritual unity. Jews all over the world shared the same beliefs and practices. That gave a common character or equality to their thinking and feeling.

The days of such creedal and ritual uniformity are gone. Because of changes in our thinking and living, religion, instead of being a unifying force has become a divisive influence. With freedom of thought inevitably comes diversity of thought and belief. This, combined with the different circumstances affecting Jews in a free and competitive world, has destroyed also uniformity of practice.

If then the religious civilization of the Jewish people is to be saved from disintegration, some other influences must fill the vacuum created by the loss of a common religious credo and regimen.

The establishment of organic Jewish communities would, of course, contribute to this end. But they can at best provide the organized machinery of Jewish life. The spirit to animate the communal organism will derive from their cultural activities, among which the arts will have to figure prominently.

The arts, by giving an emotionally stirring interpretation of the shared experience of Jews, create a common intellectual and emotional content for Jewish life. The same art forms can unite in a common emotion people of widely different points of view. A person who wit-

nesses a performance of the D y b b u k , even though he is far removed from the thought-world of the Hasidim whom it portrays, is nevertheless, by the magic of art, united with them in spirit. When the late Solomon Schechter suggested the burning bush as the symbol for the seal of the Jewish Theological Seminary, he did not do so because of a personal belief in the historicity of the story in Exodus, but because, as a symbol, it had the power of uniting us in this generation with our forefathers who held that belief. Jews of all shades of religious and non-religious convictions, when they enter the Jewish Museum and view the art objects there, are moved with a spirit of reverence and sanctity. It is significant that, although the Jewish community in Israel has not yet made any deep impression on the rest of Jewry by its religious development, its songs, dances, poetry, and art have already helped to create a strong bond between it and the Diaspora.

69. Will not Jewish artists who express themselves in terms of the common American culture consider identification with the Jewish community a hindrance, and insistence on Jewish subject matter an annoyance?

All art demands that the artist be deeply interested in the subject matter of his art. Therefore, we cannot expect the production of Jewish art by artists who have no interest in Jew-

ish life. Fortunately, however, that does not apply to all Jewish artists. Many Jewish artists are interested in Judaism, but do not give much expression to that interest because there is so little demand for the products of Jewish art. The artist, after all has to earn his livelihood through his artistic production. If Jewish communal institutions would encourage the Jewish artist who is interested in Jewish life, by employing his artistic services on all sorts of Jewish communal projects, the artistic productivity of Jewish artists along Jewish lines would be increased.

Moreover every increase in the artistic expression of Jewish life helps to stimulate interest in Judaism on the part of esthetically sensitive souls. The result would be that many artists who now view Jewish life as dull and drab would develop a new interest in Judaism, and discover in it new emotional experiences that would goad them to artistic expression.

70. What is the Reconstructionist approach to modern economic problems?

The attitude of Reconstructionism to the economic problems of our day affords a good example of how we believe that Judaism should foster universal values.

What is the core of the economic problem of our age as it affects ethical values? It is

that modern technology, while making possible a desirable abundance of production, necessitates the mobilization of power, both of capital and labor, in a way that tends to deprive the individual of freedom and initiative. Ways and means must be found for achieving the maximum of security without detriment to freedom, and the maximum of freedom without striking at collective processes which, by insuring abundant production, hold the promise of economic security for all.

The Reconstructionist movement cannot give a detailed blueprint for a planned economy which would meet those requirements. We can merely indicate how, in accordance with the Reconstructionist philosophy, our being Jews should influence our attitude toward the problem.

We must realize that not only Jewish life, but human life in general is in need of reconstruction by the continuous application of intelligence and good will to the solution of emergent problems. Our present-day economic difficulties cannot be solved, for example, by concepts of property which were valid for a society before the revolutionary changes produced by modern technology. Neither the traditional maxims, so often invoked in behalf of private ownership and of non-intervention by the State, nor any dogmatic economic creed like Communism, can solve those problems.

The laws of the Torah and the fiery denunciations of economic injustice by the Prophets can afford us inspiration but not guidance. Guidance must come from what we can learn by the continual study and observation of human relations, as they operate in economic processes. For the application of their tested conclusions to the advancement of the dignity and freedom of the individual, Jews should utilize the resources and facilities of all their communal institutions.

71. What should Jews do who wish to participate in socially progressive movements and yet find that conspicuous Jewish participation may be prejudicial to such movement?

It is a principle of Jewish religion to "seek peace and pursue it," meaning by peace all that is denoted by the Hebrew word *shalom*, namely personal and social welfare. To abandon, for opportunistic reasons, causes which we are convinced contribute to social and economic justice and fraternal relations is, from the point of view of our religious ethic, sinful.

Even from the standpoint of Jewish survival, there is little hope of Jewry's being able to perpetuate itself in the Diaspora, unless Jewish civilization can commend itself to the individual Jew as worth preserving because of its contribution to the good of humanity.

Nor is there ground for fear that a good cause will be lost because Jews participate

in it. A cause that cannot succeed without catering to such sinister prejudices as anti-Semitism cannot be a good cause, however noble the slogans it proclaims to the world, for it harbors within it the seed of corruption.

72. Should Jews give preference to Jews in employment?

Under normal conditions, the principle of no discrimination in economic life should be observed. Under existing conditions, however, Jews suffer very much from discrimination against them. It would aggravate the plight of Jews, if their own people would do nothing to redress the economic balance.

Jews should, however, also give preference in employment to other victims of economic discrimination, such as Negroes, Mexicans, Asiatics and foreigners generally.

Moreover, not only Jews, but all men who sympathize with the victims of economic discrimination, should likewise do all in their power to afford such victims every opportunity for employment.

No terms can be strong enough to denounce those Jews who themselves discriminate against employing their fellow-Jews.

73. What is the Reconstructionist attitude to intermarriage?

Since Jews are a minority and Judaism is exposed to tremendous disintegrating forces from

the non-Jewish environment, and since Reconstructionism is concerned with the perpetuation of Judaism it cannot approve of uncontrolled intermarriage with non-Jews. If, however, a non-Jew who desires to marry a Jew, after studying what is involved in being a Jew and what are the principles and practices of Judaism, is willing to undergo formal conversion to Judaism, he should be given every encouragement and should be welcomed into the Jewish community. Only in this way can we compensate for losses through intermarriage where conversion to Judaism is not made a condition. It is unreasonable to expect that Jewish religion and culture will be perpetuated in homes resulting from mixed marriages where no such requirement is insisted on.

It is inevitable that a certain amount of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews will take place whether we approve or do not. We cannot regard as a proper Jewish marriage any union between a Jew and a non-Jew who has not been converted.

Though that interdicts the officiation at such a marriage by a rabbi or any other functionary of the Jewish community, it does not mean that we should regard the couple as living in an immoral relationship. It merely means that the Jewish party to the marriage is guilty of a dereliction in his or her obligations to Judaism.

74.

What, from the Reconstructionist viewpoint, is right and what is wrong with Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Secularist Judaism, respectively?

What is right in Orthodoxy is its insistence on Judaism as a way of living and not merely a way of speaking, its emphasis on expressing our religious faith not merely in vague and abstract ideals but in specific norms of behavior, its keeping us conscious of our Judaism by a religious regimen that makes demands on us every day and almost every hour of the day and by abundant use of the Jewish cultural heritage.

What is wrong is its intolerance, its claim to having a monopoly of religious truth, its assumption that all non-Orthodox Jews are sinners, no matter how loyally these Jews identify themselves with the Jewish people and how conscientiously they hold to their own conception of what Judaism demands of the Jew in our day.

What is right about Reform is its acceptance of evolution, its recognition of the historic processes by which Judaism changes in response to changing conditions and yet retains its identity by virtue of the sense of historic continuity.

What is wrong about Reform is its imperfect realization of the intimate relation of Jewish religion with Jewish peoplehood and the secular aspects of Jewish culture. In its inception it renounced all those aspects of Jewish re-

ligion which stressed the hope of renewing national life, or which emphasized the individuality of the Jewish people. It gave up the expectation of a return to Zion, of the restoration of political life associated with it, denied the importance of the Hebrew language except for a limited role in worship, and discarded the dietary laws. Later, when Zionism arose, it opposed that movement. Although, to the credit of its leaders, Reform did not remain static and has reversed itself on the subject of the peoplehood of Israel, the importance of Eretz Yisrael, and the need for more religious-cultural folkways, these progressive attitudes have not yet gained currency among the laity. The American Council for Judaism, for example, still operates with the older Reform ideology which has been discarded by the greater part of the rabbinic leadership of the Reform movement.

What is right about Conservatism is its stress on *k' l a l y i s r a e l*, the unity and integrity of the Jewish people, its greater stress on practice than on dogma as evidence of religious loyalty, the recognition that the same standards of behavior may be justified by different rationales. In recent years there has been also a growing acceptance of the idea that, even in practice, a greater measure of diversity must be tolerated in a free and democratic society, and that such diversity is in no wise inconsistent with spiritual unity of purpose.

What is wrong with Conservatism is its failure to come to grips with the challenge to tradition. It has tended to make a virtue of inconsistency, thus justifying, in no small measure, the charge of its opponents that it is ruled by expediency rather than by principle. It has rationalized its reluctance to adopt a consistent ideological position on mooted questions by a blind reliance on unconscious historical and psychological process. Although it no longer claims to be an "adjectiveless" Judaism, it still considers itself the authentic Judaism, without qualification or reservation.

As for Secularist Judaism, we assume that the question refers only to those Secularist Jews who take an affirmative attitude to Jewish survival. In the Secularist Judaism which prevails among certain Zionist circles and in Jewish fraternal organizations and among many promoters of Hebrew and Yiddish language and literature, what is right is their recognition of the values of Jewish peoplehood and of Eretz Yisrael as the creative center of Jewish cultural creativity.

What is wrong with Secularist Judaism is the failure of its adherents to understand the basic role of religion in Jewish culture. Identifying religion only with those manifestations of it which have stood in the way of cultural development and human progress, they tend to deprecate its value for Jewish life today. But human nature demands faith in the possibilities

of human development, and to inculcate that faith is the essential function of religion. Jewish Secularists, by their aloofness, both fail to participate in the necessary reconstruction of Jewish religion and deprive their own cultural efforts of the stimulation and direction which religion at its best affords.

75.

If Reconstructionism hopes to strengthen the Jewish tradition by rebuilding it, why is Reconstructionism regarded by Orthodoxy as subversive?

The Orthodox position is that the 613 *mitzvot*, or commandments contained in the Torah, were revealed by God to Israel on Mount Sinai and are forever binding upon all Jews. Reconstructionism insists that no tradition can survive which is in conflict with the best thinking of conscientious investigators of the truth. The Orthodox view does not accord with the best thinking on the subject to date, and hence cannot, in Reconstructionist opinion, survive. Orthodox traditionalists are therefore right in regarding this view as subversive of theirs.

Reconstructionists believe that tradition should not be regarded as a static and unchanging system of beliefs and practices. On the contrary, insofar as it is a living tradition, it is necessarily an evolving one. The basic spiritual and moral urges of the adherents of a religion find expression in different be-

liefs and practices in response to changing conditions.

How then is the continuity of the tradition maintained? Through the sense of oneness that unites all the generations of a people in time, and all its contemporary adherents in space, in a common striving to help all attain the fullest measure of growth and self-fulfilment.

76. What is the essential difference between the Reconstructionist movement and Reform?

Reform and Reconstructionism are neither identical nor are they mutually exclusive. Reform has, from the first, assumed that Jewry in modern times can be only a religious communion. Although Reform has in recent years come to accept the concept of Jewish peoplehood, it has not integrated the lay activities that constitute so important a part of Jewish life—Zionism, defense, social service, etc.—into its conception of Judaism. They are still treated as merely incidental to Jewish life, instead of as a course of moral and spiritual values which should become part of Judaism. Reform, moreover, does not deal with the problem of religious diversity as a permanent factor of Jewish life, or with the problem of the status of the Jewish people as a whole. The same holds true, in greater or lesser degree, of Orthodoxy and Conservatism.

The purpose of Reconstructionism is to persuade those religious groups to incorporate these problems and activities into their respective philosophies of Judaism and to discover in them a basis for cooperation.

Since those who inaugurated the Reconstructionist movement did not find the theology and mode of worship in any of the existing religious groups wholly compatible with their own religious outlook, they have found it necessary to reinterpret the tradition along new lines and to revise the ritual in accordance with such reinterpretation. Many rabbis in both the Conservative and the Reform groups are in sympathy with that endeavor. That does not affect in any respect their status as loyal members of their own rabbinical bodies.

77. Is there any significance in the fact that many Reform congregations are returning to traditional practices?

That return has been commonly interpreted as a response to an emotional hunger for the mystical, the poetic and the symbolic, with which Reform did not sufficiently reckon in its earlier phase. It is questionable, however, whether that explanation sufficiently accounts for the facts.

The return of many Reform congregations to a greater observance of traditional ritual can be explained on social and psychological grounds.

From the social standpoint, the accession of members, who were brought up in Orthodox homes and who would miss traditional rituals for which they had developed a sentimental attachment in their childhood, goes far toward explaining the new trend.

Psychologically, the trend arises from the very motivation of the worshiper in joining a congregation. He does so for the sake of identifying himself with the Jewish people and its spiritual career. That is not nationalism, but the very essence of Jewish religion. The principal significance of ritual observance is that it gives those who practice it a sense of oneness with the Jewish people. Since the events culminating in the establishment of the State of Israel, the desire of Jews to identify themselves with their people has increased. The new trend in Reform congregations may be interpreted as a natural and healthy expression of that desire.

78. Is there not danger that the more theoretical and radical part of the Reconstructionist program may be followed and the more conservative and practical principles neglected?

There is that danger. Reconstructionism involves the abandonment of certain habits of thought or practice as well as the adoption of certain other habits. It is negative as well as affirmative. The negative elements are neces-

sary to clear the ground for more vital and creative activity. As the movement gains in popularity, it runs the risk that some Jews, who wish to evade their personal responsibility for maintaining Jewish life, will avail themselves of the negative aspects of Reconstructionism to give a cloak of respectability to their indifference to Jewish traditional values.

This is a risk which Reconstructionism shares with all progressive movements, particularly with such as call for self-government in place of submission to authority. Followers of such movements are always in danger of casting off duties which have become obsolete, without assuming the new duties which life imposes.

But the risk must nevertheless be taken, because nothing good can come of a "do-nothing" policy. We should, however, be aware of the danger and do all we can to avert it. The Reconstructionist movement has sought to avert that danger by setting up, as criteria of Jewish loyalty, not a creed of common beliefs, but an affirmation of common spiritual wants. These criteria of Jewish loyalty, thirteen in number, are:

1. We want Judaism to help us to overcome fear, temptation, and disheartenment.

2. We want Judaism to imbue us with a sense of responsibility for the righteous use of the blessings wherewith God endows us.

3. We want the Jew so to be trusted that his yea will be taken as yea, and his nay as nay.

4. We want to learn how to utilize our leisure to best advantage physically, intellectually and spiritually.

5. We want the Jewish home to live up to its traditional standards of virtue and piety.

6. We want the Jewish upbringing of our children to further their moral and spiritual growth and to enable them to accept with joy their heritage as Jews.

7. We want the synagogue to enable us to worship God in sincerity and truth.

8. We want our religious traditions to be interpreted in terms of understandable experience and to be made relevant to our present day needs.

9. We want to participate in the upbuilding of Eretz Yisrael as a means to the renaissance of the Jewish spirit.

10. We want Judaism to find rich, manifold and ever new expression in philosophy, in letters, and in the arts.

11. We want all forms of Jewish organization to make for spiritual purpose and ethical endeavor.

12. We want the unity of Israel throughout the world to be fostered through

mutual help in time of need, and through co-operation in the furtherance of Judaism at all times.

13. W e w a n t Judaism to function as a potent influence for justice, freedom and peace in the life of men and nations.

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